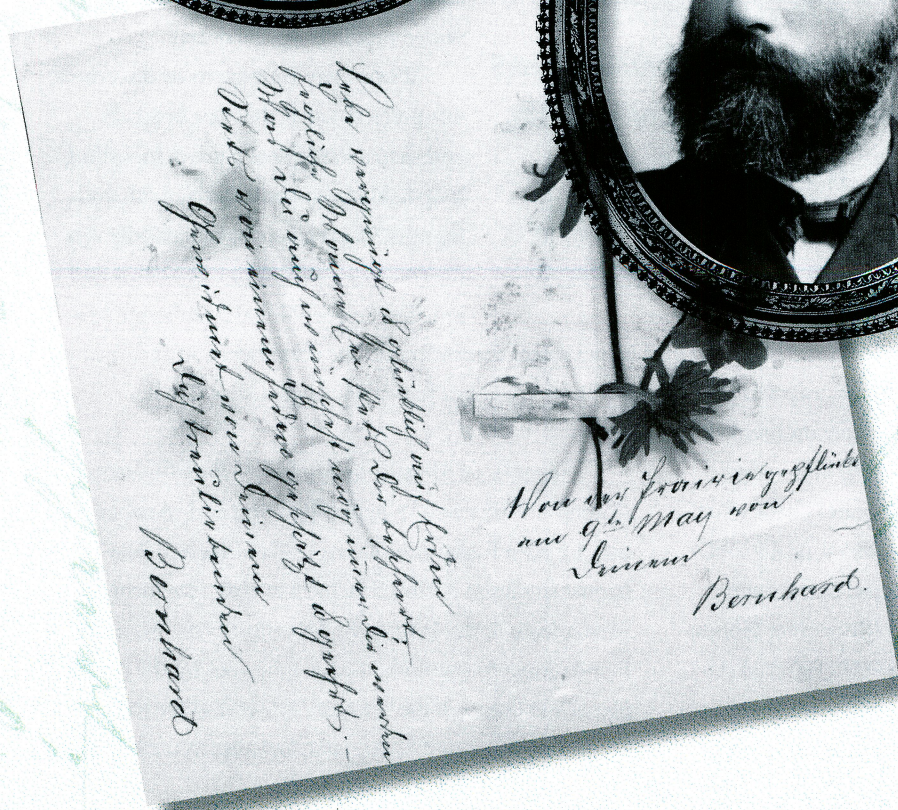


Mennonite Historical Bulletin

Vol. LXXIII, No. 5 • January 2012

Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee

LETTERS OF LOVE



A
Valentine's Day
Celebration



Global Mennonite history challenges global Mennonite identity



Rich Preheim, director
Mennonite Church USA
Historical Committee

In 1909, Goshen (Ind.) College's new dean, C. Henry Smith, published the doctoral dissertation he had completed at the University of Chicago two years earlier. Titled *The Mennonites of North America*, it was the first scholarly general history of American Mennonites and would later be expanded into the more well-known *Story of the Mennonites*.

Also in 1909, General Conference Mennonite Church members Henry J. and Maria Miller Brown arrived in China to begin work that, five years later, would become part of the GCMC mission board. Thus China would join India and Indonesia as the only non-Western countries at the time with missionaries sent by North American or European Mennonite denominational mission organizations.

Since then, historical studies and mission programs have not just grown but exploded. North American Mennonites annually produce dozens of history books and memoirs, some half-dozen journals and magazines (including this one) and a passel of newsletters. All the while, the number of church members in the global South – Africa, Asia and Latin America – continues to mushroom and eclipse those in the West.

Historical awareness and mission work are two of the 20th centuries' greatest gifts to Mennonitism. They are also the source of 21st-century tension.

It's not negative tension but creative, capable of producing profound revelations and brilliant breakthroughs. It's the stretching and pulling that occurs when we start wrestling with a new issue. That's what participants from a dozen countries did at an October conference commemorating the Global Mennonite History Project. Held at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., the conference featured the release of *Churches Engage Asian Traditions*, the fourth book in the series, which follows volumes on Europe,

Africa and Latin America. The final title in the series, on North America, is scheduled to come out later this year.

The Global Mennonite History Project was a groundbreaking initiative. For the first time, at least in any comprehensive fashion, Mennonites in the South told their own stories. And it's challenging long-held notions of identity and influence.

Until now, Mennonite history has revolved around the West. Anabaptism was born in Europe, after all, and it was North Americans and Europeans who took the faith to far-off lands. But the churches they started are now sending their own mission workers. Congolese Mennonites are planting churches in Angola and South Africa. The Brazilian church has personnel in Mozambique. Indonesia is preparing to send a couple to Thailand. Western Mennonites are only on the periphery in such stories.

Meanwhile, Mennonite churches in Honduras and Indonesia have been sending workers to the United

States. The implications of being on the receiving end of the missionary enterprise still need to be determined, but it surely flips our conventional historical understandings upside down.

While there is much to be discerned, it is perfectly clear that our brothers and sisters in the South are demolishing long-held ideas of normative faith and that the West no longer unilaterally sets the standards for Mennonite belief and practice. As the Global Mennonite His-

tory Project demonstrates, the churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America have their own stories to tell.

...

This issue of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* features "Cloud of Witnesses," a new column on early Anabaptism by John Rempel, professor of theology and Anabaptist studies at AMBS. The birth and development of Anabaptism in the 16th and 17th centuries is obviously foundational to our faith. But as time goes by, the people, places and events of the era fade further into the mist. "Cloud of Witnesses" is one small attempt to remedy that.

Our brothers and sisters in the South are demolishing any long-held ideas of normative faith, and the West no longer unilaterally sets the standards.

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**Mennonite
Church
USA**

Historical
Committee

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On the cover: Future wife and husband Wilhelmina Eisenmayer and Bernhard Warkentin and his 1875 poem to her.
Photos: Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton



Mennonite conscientious objectors peel potatoes at Camp Funston near Manhattan, Kan., circa 1918.

Stories of kindness for World War I conscientious objectors

The stories of conscientious objectors during World War I are rife with brutality and injustice. But not always. A group of Mennonites was incarcerated at the U.S. penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pa., where they encountered respectful, even kind treatment. One guard would tell the men that he would come down hard on them that day but assured them that it was only for show; he didn't want to

be accused of partiality toward the COs. On another occasion, a guard mentioned that it was a good day to go swimming, which was against the rules. He took the Mennonite prisoners to a nearby swimming hole and walked away. He never gave them permission to swim but it was apparent they were free to do so. — *Juniata Mennonite Historical Center Echoes*

DNA test links Puerto Rican and Swiss-German

DNA testing, an increasingly popular tool in genealogical research, has revealed a genetic connection between two Lancaster County Mennonites of seemingly disparate ethnic backgrounds. Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society director Rolando Santiago, a native of Puerto Rico, and Swiss-German Darwin L. Martin come from the same ancestral Germanic tribe.

The Santiago and Martin lines converge in Galicia, a province in northwestern Spain. According to family tradition, Santiago's family came from Galicia and settled in

Puerto Rico in the early 16th century during a period of Spanish colonization. More than 1,000 years earlier, members of a southern German tribe migrated to Galicia, although Martin's direct forebears, who were part of the tribe, remained behind and eventually settled in the Emmental region of Switzerland.

"DNA reveals that humanity is intricately and delicately knitted together," Martin said. "We are far closer to those who are very different from us than anyone would have guessed." — *The Mirror*

New museum focuses on Germans from Russia

A new Museum for the Cultural History of Germans from Russia has opened in Detmold, Germany. While not specifically a Mennonite museum, its founders and most of its staff and board members are Mennonite. The Detmold area, in northwestern Germany, has been home to more than 2.5 million Russian-Mennonite immigrants since the 1970s.

The museum is located on the grounds of a former British military airfield, used from World War II until the early 1990s. The two-story building, covering more than 5,000 square feet, has one the main level displays on history until 1917 and exhibits from the Soviet era on the lower level. Also included are a library, archives and room for art exhibits.

During the opening ceremony, representatives from the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Man., presented a plaque with one hand-knitted sock and the words "A friendly relationship is like a pair of socks – it requires two." It is one of a pair of socks knitted by a Russian Mennonite immigrant. The other is on display at the Mennonite Heritage Village. — *Mennonite Historian*

TAKE FIVE

States that have hosted the most denominational conventions*

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Ohio – 18 | 4. Kansas – 7 |
| • GC – 10 | • GC – 4 |
| • MC – 7 | • MC – 2 |
| • MC USA – 1 | • Joint GC/MC – 1 |
| 2. Pennsylvania – 14 | 5. Illinois – 5 |
| • MC – 7 | • MC – 3 |
| • GC – 5 | • GC – 1 |
| • Joint GC/MC – 1 | • Joint GC/MC – 1 |
| • MC USA – 1 | 5. Iowa – 5 |
| 3. Indiana – 11 | • MC – 4 |
| • MC – 7 | • GC – 1 |
| • GC – 4 | |

*Regular conventions of the General Conference Mennonite Church (GC), Mennonite Church (MC) and Mennonite Church USA (MC USA).

Mental healthcare work part of Canadian Mennonite experience during World War II

Like their counterparts in the United States, Canadian Mennonite conscientious objectors entered the dark world of mental health care during World War II. Out of 10,851 COs, 80 worked in three mental institutions, all in Manitoba.

Following the outbreak of the war, the Canadian government initially offered COs work in national parks as an alternative to military service. But two issues had arisen by 1943. First was a belief in the church that the national park assignments were not the best use of the young men's skills. Second, mental hospitals, were experiencing dramatic staff shortages as employees joined the military. The alternative service program was enlarged and diversified in April 1943.

Those who worked in mental institutions quickly found themselves in a strange and disconcerting environment. Herbert Brandt recalled, "I was an orderly shoved into a world of men with mental illness. ... [H]ere was a ward of 150 men, crowded into a relatively small space. ... The ward was dimly lit [and] there was a pungent smell of detergent combined with body odours." Another conscript, J.K. Schroeder, decried the "void of understanding, of compassion, of caring and occupational skills."

Some COs requested not to be involved with treatments such as insulin shock therapy. Insulin would be injected into patients until their blood-sugar level was so low they lost consciousness. They were then closely monitored until glucose was given to bring

them back to a conscious state. Some COs would, on their own time, sharpen shaving razors so as not to give patients' "blood baths" with dull blades, as was common.

The Mennonites also occasionally had problems with other staff. One person had three sons in the military and initially refused to work with the COs assigned to the hospital.

But the experience had a profound effect on the COs. Upon completion of their assignments, seven became the first orderlies at a new Mennonite-affiliated mental-healthcare facility in Winnipeg. Of some 40 COs who worshiped at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, eight entered full-time service of some sort. — *Journal of Mennonite Studies*

Peace network met CO need during Gulf War

In the 1980s, more than a decade after the Vietnam War and the high-profile opposition to it, Cold War tensions prompted a group of expatriate Americans in Germany to organize another anti-war movement. Among the founders of the Military Counseling Network in 1987 was Mennonite Central Committee worker Andre Gingerich Stoner. MCN sought to assist U.S. soldiers based in Germany who wanted to apply for conscientious objector status. It also wanted to connect with the active German peace movement.

Stoner focused on developing relations with personnel at Hahn Air Base in west-central Germany. He attended worship services on the base and sang in the base choir. He taught German to the airmen and their wives and played racquetball with them. Stoner subsequently had many opportunities for discussions, even the Hahn commander.

Following the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1990, MCN was inundated. Between August 1990 and January 1991, MCN

counselors took calls from more than 1,000 soldiers, their family members or girlfriends. The counselors helped about 70 soldiers to file CO claims (compared with eight cases in the previous four years) and counseled several dozens AWOL soldiers..

At least five soldiers-turned-COs were forcibly deployed from Germany to the Persian Gulf, some of them in handcuffs and even leg irons. One such person was Derrick Jones, a U.S. Army medic and a Baptist. When he learned that his unit was to deploy shortly after Christmas 1990, Jones went AWOL. After five days, he contacted his captain, who encouraged Jones to return to his unit with the assurance that while he would be disciplined for his absence, he would not be deployed. He returned on January 2, 1991, at 4 p.m. Five hours later he was on a plane bound for Saudi Arabia, despite the promises he had earlier received.

Six years after MCN was disbanded, the German Mennonite Peace Committee revived it in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. — *Mennonite Life*



Office innovation

As Mennonite Board of Missions executive secretary Ernest Bennett looks on, MBM employee Arlene Baechler operates a new IBM Selectric magnetic typewriter, an early word processor. This 1970 photo was taken at the MBM office in Elkhart, Ind. Mennonite Mission Network, MBM's Mennonite Church USA successor, as well as Mennonite Church USA Executive Board, Mennonite Education Agency and MennoMedia staff in December moved into its new office building adjacent to the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary campus in Elkhart.

'Life is rich and beautiful with you'

The ageless transcendence of love letters

With Valentine's Day approaching, love is in the air ... and in the archives. Although few repositories set out to collect them, love letters are plentiful in most American archives. In the Mennonite Church USA archives in Goshen, Ind., and North Newton, Kan., love letters arrive tucked into the personal papers of denominational leaders, mission and service workers, educators and pastors. More directly and powerfully than any other historical documents, love letters expose the common humanity of all, whose experiences constitute our heritage. Some letters reveal tenderness and playfulness in an era when smiles were seemingly forbidden in the photographer's studio. Some convey hope in the most desperate of times. Some offer reminders of the longing that separated lovers felt for one another when mail was the only means of communication. These letters, several which are excerpted here, are a testament to and celebration of love.

John F. Funk to Salome Kratz

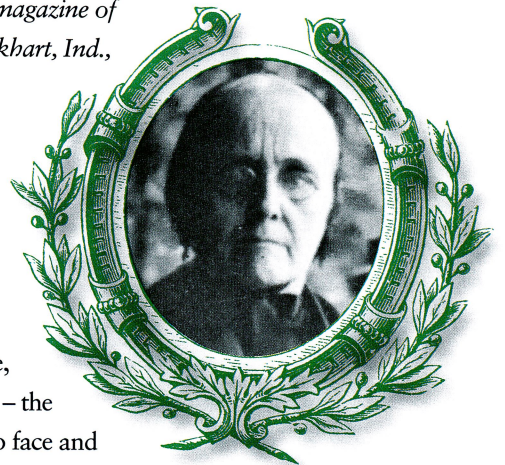
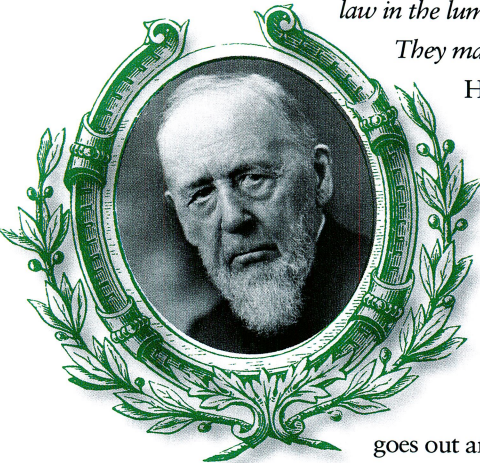
John F. Funk, a native of Bucks County, Pa., moved to Chicago in 1857 to join his brother-in-law in the lumber business. But John kept in touch with a girl back home, Salome Kratz.

They married January 19, 1864, just 18 days after John mailed the first edition of Herald of Truth, a precursor to The Mennonite, the magazine of Mennonite Church USA. The Funks moved to Elkhart, Ind., in 1867, where he established the Mennonite Publishing Co.

Chicago May 23rd 1860

Dear Salome

In the lone stillness of the stilly night my spirit goes out and on the wings of the midnight airs, returns to thee, seeking the love of other years – the pleasant memories of other days – the undisturbed and peaceful serenity of those happy house when face to face and heart to heart our spirits met and drank together the ambrosial sweets from the crystal fountain of pure and untarnished love – o; those were happy hours. Yes happy, thrice happy hours; when the broad sunlight of heaven shone upon us in one endless gleam of perennial brightness, when never a single cloud intervened to hide the lustre of its Beauty – when never a single wave from the sea of sorrow rolled up to mar its calmness, and the little storms of trouble never overtook us – when the blooming roses of our Lives young hopes bloomed every day afresh. Yet grow no thorns to pierce our tender hearts and never drooped or faded or withered or lost their freshness nor their sweet fragrance. But these were only daydreams



of youth – the Beautiful night vision; the young heart; when full of lifes joyous hopes, alone can see and they never last. Only while the heart is free and the soul untrammled by the weary cares of Life, can we realize these happy pleasures. Bye and bye cares and troubles and sorrows and disappointments and afflictions and the ten thousand petty annoyances of Life come over us and like the parched airs of a midsummer noonday drink up and absorb all these glittering dew-drops that lifes morning, like glistening diamonds, scattered around us, and then when they are all gone and their remembrance comes back occasionally to our minds and we recall them as a pleasant dream and linger over their departure as over the departure of a dear friend, it makes our hearts feel sad and we wish that we were young again, and free to dream still those happy dreams. Do I feel tonight all my happy dreams are mingled with the past – the present as its pleasures, tis true, but there are sorrows too and the future – tell me where and what? The future – dark and darker darker still, only far beyond through the veil of eternity; a light through the storm, cloud is beaming – tis the light of the sun of Righteousness permitting us to behold glimpses of our better home when the sorrows of this Life are endured and that shall be my only hope.

Well they tell me Minnie is gone, gone gone to the world beyond. O can it be that she, too, in her young girlish wifhood has already bid adieu to all of Earth. Sad. O how sad it is and get our Heavenly Father wills it so and he does all things well in Him our trust – our confidence, will not be misplaced for He will lead us in the right path. Beside the still waters of Life and make us to lie down in the green pastures of this eternal love. But the weary hours are passing one by one. Time has used me but roughly this many a day and I am weary and must rest. So while angels guard thy pillow rest – thee too in peaceful sleep, until the rosy light of morn wakes and calls thee to thy daily task. Good night.

May 27th

This is now the third time I have endeavored to complete this letter whether I will do so you shall see. Tis very warm today. I was at church this forenoon and heard a very good sermon. I have just finished my dinner and everything looks so beautiful out doors that I can scarcely content myself to stay in and write. If it was not writing to you I know I could not write at all. But perhaps you are aware that true Love conquers all impediments and overcomes all difficulties. I think it must be very pleasant now in the country in the Bright green country now that the trees are covered with their thick foliage and the little Birds singing such sweet songs of Love under their cool shades and the flowers again are Blooming and the fields are green with the waving grain. This thought brings to my mind the lines of Goethe, the great German Poet when he says: Our world is full of Beauty, Like other worlds above, And if we only did our duty,

I would be full of Love. Sad, careworn and weary, weary and careworn and sad, I come to this dearie, Canst thou not make me glad, Hast thou no word of comfort, Hid in thy warm hearts core, That thou no joyous greeting, for him who knocks at thy door. Open and let me enter, open and close not again, give me the dew of affection, give me the gentle rain, from the clouds left by the south wind, send forth the sunshine of Love, as in breezy teardropping April, light springs from the blue skies above. Let thy hand cool and tender lay a lay on my throbbing Brow, and thine eyes in their dazzling splendor, Look gently on my now. I will lean my face in your Bosom, and when you shall it there, you will clasp your arms around me, And forget all other care. Then open the door to me dearie, I am weary and pain would rest, And if you chide me for my boldness, I'll hide my face in your Breast. That you may not see the Blushes, that over my cheek may still.

Enclosed I send you a single flower. Keep it to remember me by – tis one I have cherished Long and well. Keep and preserve it till I come again.

This letter is now Long enough or you will get tired of reading it. So farewell and write to me soon again. Yes very soon. I write no name upon this page But you know the handwriting You know to who it is from.

Forget it not. The Love we owe each other that when the weary years are past – we may again rejoice together. Fare thee well.

J.

*Salome Kratz
to John F. Funk*

Hilltown May 27th 1860

Dear John

I received your letter, and glad was I to hear from you again and pleased was I to find that your love for me still remain unchanged. You say that you sometimes think that I do not love you at all or I would write oftener, now you will know, better than I can tell you that it is not true, for when a woman is once in love it is not soon forgotten, and I have frequently told you how circumstances are therefore I hope you will not think hard of me, and I am afraid the mysterious affair will by some way or other be revealed some day and then we may know what the consequence will be, then the people will talk more than ever, and I do not like the idea of people talking so much about me if I can possibly avoid it. You want to know what the people are a prophesying about us. I have not heard anything quite lately, but last summer the talk was that you was a

Continued on next page.

coming in, in the fall to take me out there, but as that did not come to pass you was a coming in the spring and we were to move in the new house, but what the talk is now I do not know nor I do not care about knowing it. I did not tell Libb that you was coming along sometime to take that tea with her, and giver her your best respects nor I do not intend to for she does not know that we correspond nor I don't want her to know it, although I guess she mistrusts that we do still she is not certain of it.

...

Mother and Father gave gone out to Ohio to visit their friends and relations; and my brother and sister and I keep house. This afternoon I was at Sunday School they have here in the meeting house every Sunday, and this evening I am a writing a letter to you and tomorrow I must answer one I received from my parents today. But time compel me to close. So farewell Dearest, while remain yours ever true and faithfull.

Salome Kratz



H.R. Voth to Katie Hirschler

H.R. Voth was an early General Conference Mennonite Church missionary among the Native Americans of Oklahoma and Arizona. But by 1901, he was a widower twice over. H.R. left the mission field to work for Western District Conference, including overseeing new congregations in Oklahoma. He met Katie Hirschler, some 30 years younger than H.R. of Gotebo, Okla., and they were married November 4, 1906.

Newton, Kan., 14 Aug 1906

My dear Katie:

I was a little unhappy last Saturday when I had to go to Alexanderwohl for several days without getting a letter from you, especially since right before we left one came from your father, but nothing from you. But happily, I found your good letter of the 10th upon my return and so everything is good again.

Frieda [H. R.'s oldest daughter, about the same age as Katie] and I were at Alexanderwohl where in the morning I had to preach in the big church. In the afternoon we were at our relatives Kornelius Koehns who had visitors from Minnesota and many other visitors. There also I had to give a short meditation in the evening. Frieda left already yesterday morning for home to be here for the beginning of the German Institute. Albert [son] and I made several other calls and didn't get home until evening.

...

I recently had a conversation with Frieda and I am of the opinion that everything will be good. She just needs more time to get used to the idea. It is somewhat difficult for her but I think she means well. If it is the Lord's will, everything will come out OK. We will leave the matter to Him in prayer.

...

Your uncle John is completely right that I should be 20 years younger, and you should think about the matter again. I am sometimes worried about the whole matter for your sake. In any case, if you sincerely love me, and I you, and if this love continues, which I firmly hope, then we will be very happy, may God grant it. I think of you often and would gladly wish to talk to you in person. If I go to Lucien [Oklahoma], I hope to see you there. It is possible that I could make a short visit to you. But that may not work, since I said the last time I was there that I hoped the next time I would take you along and that will not work just yet.

With cordial greetings,
your loving,

H. R. Voth



Nelson Kauffman to Christmas Carol Hostetler

In 1928, Christmas Carol Hostetler, a young widow from Elkhart, Ind., was invited to teach a course at Hesston (Kan.) College's winter Bible school. She accepted and eventually enrolled as a college student and proceeded to meet fellow student Nelson Kauffman. Although on the same campus, they often wrote each other. Carol, as she was known, and Nelson were married June 10, 1929. She became a successful author while he served as a pastor and denominational administrator.

Darlingest Little Sister,

I was waiting on you to come out of class to go out star gazing. Bro. Smith was going before 9:00 but there arent enough. Oh, honey you sweet darling how beautiful you are. How you thrill my soul and heart. I just tingled with joy in the Reception room this evening. You are the sweetest little girl in the world. and yet you are grown up and accomplished. I love you sweetheart. Life is rich and beautiful with you. Time is going fast. Soon you will be mine forever. Oh happy day. Oh, have we made all the preparations that we can? I believe God is leading and his will is being accomplished in our lives. My prayer is that we may be fully yielded to him continually. I wanted to hear from my folkes so badly today and didn't. I certainly

Christmas Carol Hostetler to Nelson Kauffman

Oh My Darling,

You are dear to my heart Oh very dear. I just can't forget how wonderful you were to me last night. Now I feel I know you in a different way than I did before and I like that way too. Oh I love you all. It was sad but Oh so beautiful too. You are purer and nobler to me more than ever before. I have never yet at any time felt such a powerful love for you. When I got to my room last night Oh how I wished you were here with me and I could show you how I love you. You were so tender so sweet and patient with me. And you told me the things I wanted to hear for a long time. Oh I feel certain that my life will be made richer and more victorious because of you. I could not live without you my darling. My life would be nothing. Since I found you or since you found me it has been much easier to

hope to hear tomorrow. Oh, happy June, happy summer time! How beautiful and loving all nature is. Birds are making love, Rabbits are mating, and all Creation is loving, but some people. May our love and fellowship be sweet and fruitful in winning souls and telling the message of love and good will to men. I love you tonight honey, I wish we could go out alone. Oh, how sweet and beautiful love is. I hope too that my love for you may ever grace and I want to show it more after we are married. How sweet it would be if school were out tomorrow. Come sweetheart to my breast to my arms, I love you. My dear wife-to-be. I love you dearly, truly, and deeply

Your loving Nelson



overcome temptations Oh much easier to do the things I once thot impossible. I missed you at breakfast but I hope you were resting my sweet love, my beautiful lover. Oh no one there last night could compare to you. Your hair was most beautiful. You walked and stood so straight and fine. Oh I was proud of you. I suppose the others thot that I didn't have much to say but honey folks in love I guess don't have much to say. Oh I hope dearest that you have rolled it all off of your heart.

Yours forever

Carol

Henry Mumaw to Malinda Blosser

Malinda Blosser and Henry Mumaw were both from Ohio, although it is unknown how they met. Henry taught school at various Ohio schools in the late 1860s and early '70s. Malinda, meanwhile, moved to Elkhart, Ind., to live her sister and work for John F. Funk's Mennonite Publishing Company. Henry and Malinda were married on June 27, 1872, four months after he proposed. Funk offered Henry a job, which enabled the couple to settle in Elkhart. Henry later started the Elkhart Institute, which became Goshen College in 1897.

Massillon, O to Elkhart, Indiana

Feb 23 /72

Dear Friend Malinda,

Your favor of the 13th reached me on Tuesday evening, and I need not tell you that it was joyfully received and read with unusual interest.

Indeed I was glad to receive such a long, kind, and interesting letter from you again, and to see that the time with you still continues to pass so pleasantly by. May you live long to enjoy good health,

and in the society of good friends, but above all when done with the pilgrimage below, gain a crown of eternal life, is the wish of a friend who fervently loves and respects you. May we all one day unite to sing the praises of the great redeemer in the city of pure gold, the New Jerusalem.

...

Malinda, if I should pay you a visit in the spring, either to Elkhart or Fairfield, it would be to ask you an important question and no doubt you can imagine what that would be. If you will excuse me, I will speak a little plainer and say, that it would be to ask you to be my companion for life and should this meet your approval, I will assure you that it would be my whole aim to make yours a happy life. Please write to me soon, and tell me, as you would to a friend, whether such a visit from me would be agreeable to you. And also where I should address my next letter.

Enclosed find my picture. This leaves one in good health, and may it meet you the same. Asking you yet to write to me as soon as this reaches you, I remain your Sincere friend,

Henry

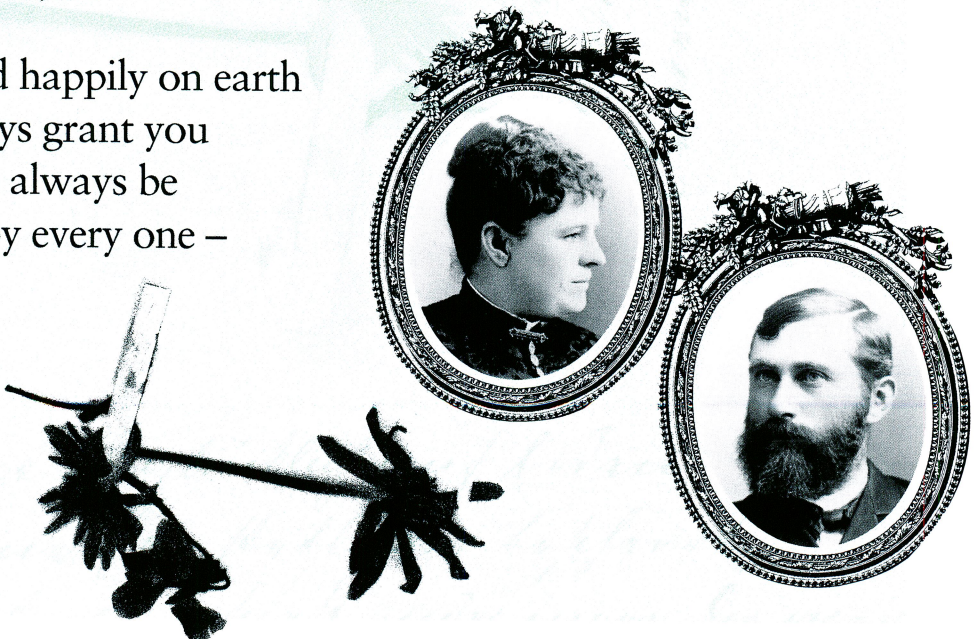
Bernhard Warkentin to Wilhelmina Eisenmayer

Bernhard Warkentin was a Russian Mennonite who came to the United States in 1872, initially living at Summerfield, Ill., before settling at Halstead, Kan., the next year. He became engaged to Wilhelmina Eisenmayer of Summerfield, and they married August 12, 1875. Bernhard was instrumental in the Russian Mennonite migrations to the United States in the 1870s and later helped found Bethel College in North Newton, Kan.

May you live joyfully and happily on earth
May every moment always grant you
What you wish, may you always be
Treasured and honored by every one –
Dedicated from your
Faithfully loving
Bernhard

Translated from German.

Accompanied by a flower "plucked from the prairie on 9 May by your Bernhard."



Orie O. Miller to Elta Wolf

Orie O. Miller of LaGrange County, Ind., and Elta Wolf of Akron, Pa., met as students at Goshen (Ind.) College. When their relationship became serious, Elta left Goshen in 1913 to return to Pennsylvania to prepare for their impending wedding. They married on August 26, 1915. Orie eventually took over his father-in-law's shoe business and became a prominent churchman.

Goshen, Ind. July 23, 1914

Dear Elta:

Well Elta there has nothing happened here in Goshen since I wrote you Mon. that I will remember very long, and sometimes I think I shouldn't tell you such unessential things. Then I think that perhaps you take the amount I write as an evidence of my love and regard for you. Perhaps you want me to put in flowery language my regard for you. I can't do that but could cite you to many poets and poems that exactly express my feelings. (Some of Browning for instance) so there is no use of me trying to do that. So sometimes I hardly know what to write. I imagine you have the same difficulty. At least most of the news you write I soon forget and recall only by referring to your letter. Then sometimes I wonder what its all for. Neither one of us I suppose but prizes the letters we get from each other as very precious. After I read your good letter the thing I liked



about it was the thought that Elta was willing to spend that much time and effort in telling those things to Me. It's the fact that you think of me and are interested in my work, successes and failures that means a whole lot more to me than anything else. Your letters coming each week just when expected are to me an evidence of this.

When I get the blues and I feel like giving up I think of the last letter I got and say to myself "Some person Cares" and on I go. Oh I know my parents and relatives have always cared but I always rather felt it was their duty to care and that after all their care for me may have been from a rather selfish standpoint. But when you who have not known me above a few years can look over all my imperfection and really care it contributes something to my life that I never felt there before. My I'm thankful for you and Bill, Vernon and Hokey and Ernest.

Well Elta hows that for a preacher? Makes good material to fill up the letter doesn't it?

...

Love to you, yours sincerely, Orie.

P.A. Penner to Martha Richert

Peter A. Penner and his first wife, Elizabeth Dickman Penner, went to India in 1900 as the first General Conference Mennonite Church overseas missionaries. Elizabeth died in India in 1906, and Peter spent 1907-1909 on furlough in his home community of Mountain Lake, Minn. During that time he became engaged to Martha Richert of Goessel, Kan., and they were married on October 24, 1909. The Penners then went to India, where they served as missionaries until 1941.



month? Come? – Come, do you ask me? Oh my dearest, it's the sweetest invitation I have ever received for a long time.

Yes, I have been anxiously waiting for it. Day after day I waited for my dear bride's call:

Come to me.

I am coming.

...

With love to all and a kiss & special love for my Martha. I am

Your

Peter

Monday morning, Aug. 9th [1909]

My Sweetness – Just now, I received your letter, in which you ask: Can you come so at to be at Newton, the 13th or 14th of the

Clara Eby to Menno Steiner

When she was 15 years old, Clara Eby met a young man she though was her “ideal,” but it was his older brother, Menno S. Steiner, who ultimately won her heart. Presaging their married life, Clara and Menno spent much of their courtship and engagement apart. While she remained home in Ohio, he worked for the Mennonite Publishing Co. in Elkhart, Ind., and became immersed in church work. In 1893, he became the Mennonite Church’s first mission worker when he was appointed to start a ministry in Chicago. Menno and Clara were married on April 8, 1894. He became the first president of Mennonite Board of Missions, while Clara formed the Women’s Missionary and Service Commission, a forerunner to Mennonite Church USA’s Mennonite Women.

Pandora, Ohio
Nov. 6, 1893

My dear Menno,

I wrote a letter to you last evening after we returned from Y.P.M. as it was early yet. I looked over it today and concluded not to send it as I thought it appeared entirely too “soft.” I do not know what caused me to write that way. I was not particularly lonesome, but somehow my affections got ahead of me.

...

Your great uncle Peter Thut was buried here yesterday afternoon. It was a very large funeral. Sarah was to take the buggy home alone from there, so she brought me home. I thought of what you told us before you left. That we should go together and console each other still.

We spoke of it and it seemed rather soon for such work. It is hardly necessary yet, but no telling how soon it will be, as we feel your absence more than you think perhaps.

I told Sarah that in some ways it was good to have you away. I think that we can realize more fully what our “beloved ones” are worth to us, and what it would be to always live without them. Please excuse the blot. The ink dropped off the pen and as this is the second letter, I do not feel like copying it.

Some of the people were at P. Bixels for dinner yesterday, among which, Burkharts whole family and myself. Mrs. B. asked me if you were in Chicago already. She said that she told the girls that whenever she wished to know anything of you that she would ask me, and that she would ask me every Sunday. They do not appear so jealous now. I presume it is because Mr. Page is paying attention to Ella. She wears a new ring upon her index finger again and when we said that he gave it to her she did not deny it. I did not think it had come to that yet, but that must be the case, or she wanted to leave that impression upon us.

I do not know what the talk is about us and was simply told that there is considerable talk out. Of course we could expect nothing else. I am glad to hear that you have received so much encouragement in your work. I really did not know what would become of you if you would not be encouraged by someone.

...

The time seems to pass so slowly since you left. It seems to me you have been gone over a month.

Yours in the bonds of love,

Clara



Compiled by Mennonite Church USA archival staff members Colleen McFarland and Natasha Sawatsky-Kingsley, Goshen, Ind., and John Thiesen, North Newton, Kan.

Photos from Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, Ind., and North Newton, Kan.

FROM DANZIG TO DOWN UNDER

A Mennonite-Jewish family's escape from the Nazis to Australia

by Gerlof Homan

Photo courtesy of Felix Harding



The Harders on an outing to the beach near Danzig, circa 1925. Front: unidentified; Ilse Harder Fürstenberg; Ilse and Hans' son, Felix; Ilse's father, Max Harder. Back: Ilse's stepmother, Maria Nickel; unidentified; Hans Fürstenberg.

Much of Mennonite history is a story of migrations in search of hospitable lands where Mennonites might worship freely and live in peace, such as the United States, Canada, Paraguay, Mexico and Australia.

Australia?

While it might seem a mistake to include it on the list, one family did move Down Under in 1940-41. But the family of Hans and Ilse Charlotte (Harder) Fürstenberg and their son, Felix, was only partly Mennonite because Hans was of Jewish descent. It was that Jewish identity that motivated their flight from Europe. But it was their Mennonite identity that helped them to complete their escape from Nazi fury.

Hans Fürstenberg and Ilse Harder were citizens of Danzig (now Gdansk, Poland), a prosperous, old Hanseatic city located at the mouth of the Vistula River on the

coast of what was then called West Prussia. It became part of the Kingdom of Prussia in the 18th century and then part of the German Empire in 1871. Under the terms of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I, most of West Prussia, with the exception of Danzig, was ceded to Poland. It became a "Free City" under the League of Nations, but Poland was granted a number of special privileges, such as access to the Baltic Sea at Danzig. These concessions, however, laid the seeds for future conflicts. The Germans bitterly resented losing West Prussia and Danzig, which separated East Prussia from the rest of Germany. Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party exploited the situation and, by the late 1930s, had gained considerable political power in Danzig, as Hitler promised to reunite German territory. Fear of Communism also motivated many Germans to vote for Hitler and the Nazis, who

many considered the best bulwark against the perceived "Red Menace" in the east. Anti-Communism would have been popular among Danzig Mennonites, who had many relatives in the Soviet Union who suffered severely under the Communist regime. Once in power in Danzig, the Nazis scrapped democracy, introduced anti-Jewish measures and, in November 1938, attacked many Jewish stores, residences and synagogues. The powerless League of Nations did not intervene. On September 1, 1939, German forces invaded Poland and seized Danzig, incorporating it into the Third Reich and initiating World War II.¹

Hans Fürstenberg was born July 2, 1893, in Gumbinnen, East Prussia, an area that had been under German rule since 1618. After the family moved to Danzig, Hans' father, Felix, owned a brewery and at one time served on the city council. The

family was well-to-do and able to allow Hans to pursue a university education, which was an upper-class privilege. Felix died about 1914 and, against the advice of her children, his widow, Betty, sold the family business at a very good price. For a short time she enjoyed the life of a millionaire, but the terrible German inflation of 1922-23 wiped her out. In 1938 she was living in Berlin. Neither Betty nor her other son, Rudolph, would survive the Holocaust.² Hans attended the Royal Technical University in Danzig and the Technical University in Munich, receiving his engineer's diploma in 1922. He worked for the well-known Vulcan shipyard in Stettin, Germany, and the Schwartzkopf locomotive factory in Berlin. Meanwhile, Hans had become interested in patent law and earned a law degree. In 1926, he joined the Jewish-owned law firm of Hans Max Heimann in Berlin.³

Ilse Charlotte Harder was born in Danzig on February 6, 1897, the daughter of Max Harder (a common surname among Danzig Mennonites) and Clara Johanna Leonore Dühning, who had a prosperous import/export business in Danzig. Clara died in 1909, and in 1910 her father married Maria Margarete Nickel, a woman with a domineering personality and later a member of local Nazi Party chapter.⁴ It is unknown how Fürstenberg and Harder met. They were married on August 2, 1919, and had one child, Felix, born on December 7, 1923.⁵

In 1940, after having fled Germany, Ilse told a Mennonite Central Committee worker in France that she and her parents were Danzig Mennonites and referred to her pastor, Erich Göttner.⁶ But none of the names of Ilse, Hans (he identified himself as a Protestant) or her parents is recorded on the Danzig Mennonite Church membership list of 1936 or on any of the membership lists of the surrounding Mennonite congregations. Nevertheless, the Fürstenbergs were keenly aware of their Mennonite connections. Ilse knew, in addition to Göttner, the

Sixteen-year-old Felix Fürstenberg, shortly after his release from the internment camp at Saint Cyprien, France, 1940.



Photo courtesy of Felix Harding

names of two prominent North American Mennonites: David Toews and Peter C. Hiebert. Toews had been chair of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, an organization that assisted Mennonites in Russia emigrate to Canada, while Hiebert was chair of Mennonite Central Committee.⁷

In 1933, the Nazi government prohibited Jews from practicing law except those who had been admitted to the bar before August 1, 1914, World War I combat soldiers and dependents of Jews who been killed in that war. In September 1938, however, all Jews were banned from the legal profession. The Heimann law firm had to close.⁸ That year was particularly violent against Jews. It culminated with *Reichskristallnacht* on November 9-10, when many homes, businesses and synagogues were ransacked or destroyed and thousands of Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Most of those arrested were

released in the following months, but more harassment and arbitrary arrests followed.⁹ By 1939, 300,000 German Jews had emigrated since the Nazis' ascendancy six years earlier.

Not all countries, however, were eager for Jewish refugees. Great Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands accepted many. But the United States, which admitted some 90,000 German Jews in the 1930s, was unwilling to issue many more visas because of anti-Semitic sentiment within the country and because of fear of inviting too much competition in the labor market during the time of the Great Depression.¹⁰ Other foreign governments often kept out Jewish refugees by alleging they could only accept political refugees.

Like many others citizens, the Fürstenbergs considered leaving Germany. It became more urgent, however, after they received a warning from a local member of

the SS, a visit in their apartment by a Gestapo official who demanded to see their Danzig passports, the arrest of Hans's brother, Rudolph, and a denunciation of Hans by his step-mother-in law, Margareta Nickel, who was angry at the Harder family for having lost a lawsuit over an inheritance dispute. In March 1938, Hans left for the Netherlands to pursue asylum for himself and his family. For centuries, the Netherlands had a very generous and liberal asylum policy, but in 1938 the Netherlands imposed many new restrictions, which were later lifted later after *Reichskristalnacht*.¹¹ Hans stayed in the city of Haarlem until July but failed to get the necessary permits to move to the Netherlands.¹² He subsequently went to Luxembourg but also failed to obtain a residence visa there. The country required refugees to obtain an alien registration card, which was only granted to those who had sufficient financial means to sustain themselves. The Fürstenbergs didn't qualify,¹³ and Hans went to Copenhagen his search for refuge for his family.

The Netherlands and Luxembourg often allowed illegal immigrants to stay. Most likely Hans did not know that. If he had and if the Fürstenbergs had immigrated, they very well could have been caught in May 1940, when Germany invaded both countries.

In the meantime, the situation in Berlin became critical. On the morning of August 18, 1938, Ilse responded to a knock on the door, where she was met by the wife of a Nazi official whom she had not seen for several years and for whom Felix had once done a "great favor." Even though the Nazis usually didn't arrest or incarcerate non-Jews married to Jews or even their Jewish spouses, the visitor warned the Fürstenbergs to leave the next day. Mother and son quickly gathered some belongings and asked a friend to notify Hans in Copenhagen that they were coming to join him. Ilse and Felix left that afternoon, leaving behind most of their earthly belong-

ings, which were eventually seized by the Nazis.¹⁴

Denmark had greatly restricted its asylum policy in the 1930s, making it almost impossible to find haven in that country. Refugees were allowed to stay from three to six months and could remain permanently if they succeeded in obtaining a work permit or found work that might be advantageous to the Danish economy. It would also help to receive the support of a local refugee committee.¹⁵ Thus, for instance, the well-known German jurist Fritz Bauer, who sought refuge in Denmark in 1936, was accepted because of his sister's residence in the country and his success in finding work.¹⁶ Also the well-known German playwright Bartold Brecht was easily granted asylum in 1933.¹⁷ But in 1938, only 3,000 of 4,500 Jewish refugees were accepted into the country.

The Fürstenbergs arrived in Copenhagen on August 18. Hans would not become a public charge, he argued, because of his ability to translate patent documents for

The United States, which admitted some 90,000 German Jews in the 1930s, was unwilling to issue many more visas because of anti-Semitic sentiment within the country and because of fear of inviting too much competition in the labor market.

foreign companies, but Danish authorities responded that such work would not benefit the economy.¹⁸ The family lingered but was finally informed they had reached the limit of 122 days they had been allowed to stay and had to leave by December 12, 1938, or face deportation to Danzig. That would mean certain imprisonment, Hans said, because he had taken more money out of the country than had been allowed by law. But the Danes were not persuaded, and on December 10, The Fürstenbergs left for Belgium via Esberg, Denmark.¹⁹

Already in August and September 1938, long before their arrival in Antwerp in December, Hans had applied for Belgian work and residence permits. Like the Netherlands, Belgium had seen an enormous influx of German Jewish refugees. Belgian asylum policy was very liberal, allowing a person, after registration with the local authorities, to stay six months. It was later reduced to three months but could be renewed if the person was making progress towards re-emigration. Those who could sustain themselves and contribute to the Belgian economy might be granted a permanent visa.²⁰ Some 10,000 Jewish refugees entered Belgium between 1933 and 1938. The influx of Jewish refugees increased significantly after the German annexation of Austria in March 1938 and *Reichskristalnacht* in November of that year. The Belgian government subsequently excluded few if any Jewish refugees and in June 1939 even accepted 214 passengers of the ill-fated St. Louis. By September 1939, Belgium had admitted some 30,000 German-Austrian Jewish refugees.²¹

The Fürstenberg family settled in Antwerp, where Felix attended a local trade school and Hans tried to assure Belgian authorities they were able to sustain themselves himself with income derived from translating patent documents. He also informed them of his stocks and bonds in the Twentsche Bank in the Netherlands, which had a total value of 9,400 guilders (\$3,500).

The case of Robert Friedmann



Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen

Like the Fürstenbergs and millions of other European Jews, Robert Friedmann experienced the brutality of Nazi-led anti-Semitism. But he was able to escape his native Austria before World War II and would proceed to become a Mennonite as well as a significant scholar of Anabaptism and particularly Hutterianism.

Friedmann grew up in a secular Jewish home. But after serving in the Austrian army during World War I, he embarked on a spiritual quest, sparked by reading Leo Tolstoy, and started studies in history and philosophy at the University of Vienna. He was introduced to Anabaptism in 1923 when a professor encouraged him to do a paper on three 16th-century Hutterian codices. Friedmann became a Christian and was baptized in 1934 in a Reformed congregation in Vienna.

In November 1938, while teaching in Vienna, Friedmann was imprisoned by the SS and beaten and tortured. “[W]e had to stand for a long time with upraised arms,” he recounted the next year, writing under a pseudonym in *Neue Wege*, a Swiss religious journal. “Finally we were taken back upstairs and ordered, amid blows and thumps and kicks, to make knee bends. What is normally a simple pleasure in a gymnasium became torment here, especially for the older men. Then came the order, ‘Face the wall!’ and again the incessant up-and-down, until at long last the cars arrived to take us to our next destination.” Friends gained Friedmann’s release after 12 days. He was finally forced to flee the next year, going first to England and then to the United States, leaving his wife and son behind.

At the invitation of noted church historian Roland Bainton, he spent the spring of 1940 as a fellow at Yale Divinity School. Friedmann’s family joined him there. Despite Bainton’s efforts, Friedmann was unable to find a teaching job. But Harold S. Bender secured for him a research fellowship at Goshen (Ind.) College, so the family moved to Indiana in July 1940. Friedmann stayed at the college for five years, helping organize the fledgling Mennonite Historical Library, contributing extensively to *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, influencing Bender’s “Anabaptist Vision” and completing his book *Mennonite Piety through the Centuries*. He also joined Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen.

Friedmann finally landed a college faculty position in 1945 when he began teaching history at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Mich. He remained there for the rest of his career, all the while continuing his Anabaptist scholarship, including writing more than 200 articles in the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. Friedmann died in 1970 at the age of 79. — Rich Preheim

The income from these holdings would be enough for him and his family for several years, he claimed. Finally, he intended to associate himself with the firm of Bruno Steyaardt in Ghent to organize the export of buttons and buckles. But the Fürstenbergs’ application for asylum was denied. “Not a single economic interest justified the presence of this alien in the kingdom,” the rejection notice stated.

Hans repeated his application for residence and work permits, and again the applications were rejected. He then received several postponement of deportation by registering for emigration visas to the United States and Australia.²² What happened to the American application is unknown, but the Fürstenbergs did succeed in obtaining Australian permits. Unfortunately, in late 1939, they were unable to leave as a family — they simply did not have the financial resources to purchase three tickets for the voyage. It was therefore decided that Hans would go to Australia first and Ilse and Felix would follow as soon as possible.

Hans left in late 1939 on the Dutch merchant steamship *Grootekerk* and arrived in Melbourne, Australia, on January 13, 1940. Oceanic travel in war-time was not without risk. A year later, the *Grootekerk* was torpedoed; there were no survivors.²³ There was also considerable risk for Hans to leave his family behind. What would happen if the war in Europe might suddenly engulf other nations such as Belgium and trap Ilse and Felix?

Australia was not the first choice of most German Jewish refugees. It was a far-away continent about which many Europeans did not know much. They preferred Europe or North and South America. Also, Australia had a very restrictive immigration policy. It was not until 1938 that the country allowed the entry of 15,000 refugees over a three-year period, a third who could be Jews. Few arrived before that date and very few after the outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939. Only 8,200-9,000

Jewish refugees entered Australia between 1933 and 1945, many of them receiving financial assistance in London or in Australia from the Jewish Welfare and Relief Society. It is unknown if the Fürstenbergs ever received such help.²⁴ But upon arrival Down Under, Hans did receive assistance from the Victorian International Refugee Emergency Council, which had strong Quaker connections.²⁵

While Hans was getting settled, Nazi forces invaded the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium and France on May 10, 1940. Belgian authorities, immediately alarmed by the presence of so many German and Austrian refugees in their midst, ordered their arrest and deportation to France. On May 11, Ilse and Felix were transported to the Belgian-French border, from where they were taken to French internment camps. Ilse went to Gurs in southern France, and Felix to Saint Cyprien on the Mediterranean. Most refugees were transported to Saint Cyprien in freight cars and had to endure an 18-day trip without much food and water. Felix was lucky. He went by passenger train and arrived in two days.²⁶

Saint Cyprien was located in Vichy France, an area that remained, by the terms of the June 20, 1940, armistice between France and Germany, under French control although its sovereignty was severely limited by Nazi Germany. Its capital was in the health resort of Vichy. Vichy France was overwhelmed by thousands of refugees, many of whom had been residing in France since the 1930s. The government was unable and unwilling to cope with the humanitarian crisis and detained many refugees in detention camps, where wretched conditions often prevailed. Jewish refugees were especially targeted for detention, and many were handed over to the German occupation authorities in 1942.

Ilse and many other German refugees in Gurs were soon released or escaped. She subsequently went to Marseilles. In Saint Cyprien, Felix lived among many refugees

who fled Spain's civil war. There were shortages of many kinds in Saint Cyprien, and Felix lost much weight. Fortunately, he and his mother were able to contact each other, and he was released in mid-July. Felix joined his mother in Marseilles, where she hardly recognized him because of his emaciated appearance. They lived in the North African section of the city, where rental property was cheaper.²⁷

Meanwhile, Ilse was able to contact Hans in Australia. On June 24, 1940, he cabled the Mennonite Central Committee office in Akron, Pa., and asked that they wire his wife \$25 in Marseilles. She was in "aw-

Felix joined his mother in Marseilles, where she hardly recognized him because of his emaciated appearance.

ful distress," Hans emphasized.²⁸ The only people MCC could contact in France were Ernest Bennett and Edna Ramseyer. Bennett had been in Spain, working with the Mennonite Relief Committee of the Mennonite Church. When the Spanish civil war ended in the spring of 1939, the American Friends Service Committee and MCC asked him to represent them in France. He agreed to do so, and in the weeks following helped MCC begin its relief work in southern France. But because of the uncertainty and chaos of the time, it was not until September 18, 1940, that MCC executive secretary Orie O. Miller asked Bennett to try to find and contact Ilse and Felix.²⁹

It was Ramseyer, another AFSC-MCC

worker and the director of a refugee children's home near Marseilles, who first met Ilse in early October 1940. Ilse told Ramseyer her story. Although Ilse was happy to tell her of the receipt of her tickets for the voyage to Australia, she was in severe financial straits and in need of French exit visas. Subsequently, she received some financial assistance from Bennett.³⁰

Although Ilse said goodbye to Ramseyer on October 7, she did not leave France until a month later. Since Ilse and Felix were unable to secure French exit visas, they sneaked across the French-Spanish border near Cerbere. They then went to Lisbon, where they hoped to obtain passage to Australia. But there the Fürstenbergs learned they had to travel to Australia via the United States. Most likely MCC helped them to obtain transit visas enabling them to set sail for the United States. They arrived in New York on November 24 and briefly stayed with a Quaker family until they left on the final leg of their travels. Ilse and Felix arrived in Melbourne on January 11, 1941, two days short of one year after Hans.³¹

The reunited family settled in the Melbourne suburb of Hawthorn, where they bought a house. Hans soon found work as a draftsman but suffered a stroke and died in September 1949. Ilse successfully obtained compensation for the loss of their Berlin household property. But it took 10 years and an enormous amount of correspondence before a Berlin court finally agreed in April 1959 to grant her 25,000 Reichsmarks (\$4,000). Interestingly, Hans in 1941 had estimated the value of their household items to be about 24,000 Reichsmarks. This restitution money was used to pay for Felix's further education, and he became a mathematics teacher in Australia. Ilse died in 1981.³²

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From Danzig to Down Under

endnotes

- 1 Much of the information on pre-World War II Danzig came from Hebert S. Levine, *Hitler's Free City: A History of the Nazi Party in Danzig 1939* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).
- 2 Most of the information on the Fürstenberg and Harder families came from extensive correspondence with Felix C. Harding, the former Felix Fürstenberg, Benteleigh, Victoria, Australia, and the dossiers UDL-sag 63.892, Riksarchivet [State Archives], Copenhagen, Denmark, and A123.708 and A 334.025, Algemeen Rijksarchief and Rijksarchief in de Provinciën [General State Archives and Archives in the Provinces], Brussels, Belgium. Both archives did an excellent job of keeping detailed records on refugees. Unless specifically documented all factual information on the family was furnished by Felix Harding.
- 3 UDL-sag. 63.892, Riksarchivet.
- 4 Statement by Ilse Fürstenberg in 63 WGA 2675/50, Wiedergutmachungsamt [Restitution Office], Landesarchiv [National Archives], Berlin, Germany.
- 5 See note 2 and Gdansk archives. Ilse had two brothers, one of whom died at age 18 of scarlet fever and another who was killed in World War I.
- 6 Christian Neff, *Mennonitisches Adressbuch: 1936* (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider, 1936).
- 7 *Menmonite Encyclopedia*, s.v. Danzig; William I Schreiber, *The Fate of the Prussian Menmonites* (Göttingen: Göttingen Research Committee, 1955), 35-36.
- 8 Simone Ladwig-Winters, *Anwalt ohne Recht: Das Schicksal jüdischer Reichsanwälte in Deutschland nach 1933* (2d ed. Berlin: Ne.Bra, 2007), 28-29.
- 9 A good example of Gestapo harassment of German Jews married to Christians is Viktor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness*, trans. Martin Chalmers (2 vols.: New York: Random House, 1998).
- 10 Davis S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: American and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-41* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), 210. *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Jews, 1940-1945* (New York: The New Press, 1984). One example of American reluctance to admit too many Jewish refugees was the refusal to allow the passengers of the St. Louis to enter the United States. The St. Louis was a German passenger ship that left Hamburg on May 13, 1939, with 907 passengers on board, most of who were German refugees who expected to be admitted to Cuba. But upon their arrival in Havana, the Cuban government refused to admit

- most of them, claiming their visas were invalid. The ship returned to Europe, where the Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain, and France admitted them. About one half of those who returned survived the Holocaust. Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan Witts, *Voyage of the Doomed* (New York: Stein and Day, 1974).
- 11 Bob Moore, *Refugees from Nazi Germany in the Netherlands, 1933-1940* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1986), 60ff, 33-34, 74-78; L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1969), I: 434, 454, 481, 485, 488; D. Cohen, *Zuwendend en dolend: De Joodse vluchtelingen in Nederland in de jaren 1933-1940* (Haarlem: De Erven Bohn, 1955), 125-126, 168, 281.
- 12 No evidence has been found in Dutch archives on Fürstenberg's application.
- 13 No evidence has been found in the Luxembourg archives on Fürstenberg's application for asylum. Evidence was found in Danish and Belgian archives. See above note 2. One can find information on Luxembourg's asylum policies in Germaine Goetzinger, et al., *Exilant Luxembourg, 1933-1947* (Mersch: Centre Nationale de littérature, 2007) and Serge Hoffmann, "Luxembourg-Asyl und Gastfreundschaft in einem kleinen Land," in Wolfgang Benz and Juliane Wetzels, eds., *Solidarität und Hilfe für Juden während der NS Zeit* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 1996).
- 14 Imtrud Wojak, *Fritz Bauer, 1933-1968: Eine Biographie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009), 124-125; Leni Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry: Test of Democracy*, trans. Morris Gradel (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 19-20; Hugo Valentin, "Rescue and Relief Activities in Behalf of Jewish Victims of Nazism in Scandinavia," *Yivo Annual of Jewish Social Science* 8 (1953): 228-229; Hans Uwe Petersen, "Die dänische Flüchtlingspolitik 1933-1945" in Ruth Dinesen, Birgit Nielsen, et al., eds., *Deutschsprachiges Exil in Dänemark nach 1933: Zu Methoden und Einzelergebnissen*. Vol 12 of Vorträge der Kolloquiums am 1. und 2. Oktober 1984. Kopenhagener Kolloquien zur deutschen Literatur (Kopenhagen: Wilhelm Fink, 1984).
- 15 For more on their belongings left behind, see below, p. 11. The Nazi wife who alerted the Fürstenbergs remembered Felix's kindness towards her son.
- 16 Bruce Cook, *Brecht in Exile* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982), 17ff; Ronald Hayman, *Brecht* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 173ff.
- 17 UDL-sag.68.582, Riksarchivet.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Belgian asylum policy is discussed in Frank Caestecker, *Ongewenste gasten: Joodse vluchtelingen en migratie in de jaren dertig in België* (Brussels: VUB Pres).
- 20 Ibid. 280.
- 21 A 123.708, Algemeen Rijksarchief.

- 22 Series A12508, National Archives of Australia. Canberra, Australia.
- 23 Michael Blakney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees, 1933-1945* (Sydney: Croom: Helm, 1985), 103ff; Paul Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994), 117; Herbert Liffman, "In Search of My Identity," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 31/1 (1985):11.
- 24 Marcel Bervoets-Tragholz, *La Liste de Saint-Cyprien: L'odyssée de plusieurs milliers de juifs expulsés le 10 mai 1940 par les autorités belges vers des camps d'internement du sud de France, anti-chambre des camps d'extermination* (Brussels: Alice Editions, 2006), p. 11.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid., passim.
- 27 Orie O. Miller to Ernest Bennett, July 10, 1940. Marie E. Howie, Melbourne, Australia, Friends Meeting House, May 27, 1940, to American Friends Service Committee, and A. Constance Duncan of Victoria International Refugee Emergency Council, Melbourne, Australia, to American Friends Service Committee, August 14, 1940. All in MCC Collection, IX-19, box 1, files 3 and 4 and box 2, file 29, Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen IN.
- 28 Orie O. Miller to Ernest Bennett, July 10, 1940. MCC Collection, IX-19. Box 1, file 3. Ibid.
- 29 Edna Ramseyer Diary, MSS 500, Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, KS; Gerlof D. Homan, "Friends and Enemies: The World War II Origins of MCC Work in France," *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*, 71/2 (April 2010): 11.
- 30 Series A12508, National Archives of Australia.
- 31 See note 2.
- 32 See above note 9. The Fürstenbergs were most fortunate: If their belongings had been stored in a certain place, as had planned at one time, everything would have been destroyed in an Allied bombing attack on Berlin because of the destruction of the proposed storage facility. Ilse Harder was not the only Mennonite to reach Australia. Anna Bergen Kosloff and her family in 1931 fled Russia to China, where they remained until 1933, when the country's civil war forced them to relocate to India. From there the family tried to go to Canada, where they had relatives, but were denied. They finally received permission to immigrate in 1939 but had to do so via Germany. They arrived in Hamburg in August, just weeks before the outbreak of war in September 1939 and were unable to leave for 10 years. Finally in 1949, Australia opened up as an immigration option, and the family landed Down Under in 1950. The story is found in Anna Kosloff and Anna Bilborough, *Stateless* (Richmond, VIC: Statehouse Publications, 1983). I thank James Urry for calling my attention to this fascinating story.

Resources from the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee to help preserve our heritage, interpret our faith and proclaim God's work among us



The Radicals DVD

The major motion picture about Margaretha and Michael Sattler and the birth of Anabaptism. Also available in Spanish. \$30. \$25 per copy for multiple copies.



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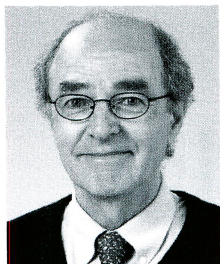
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The renegade rituals of the first Anabaptists



John D. Rempel, professor of theology and Anabaptist studies, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

When we think about our spiritual ancestors, we think first of all about their radical words and actions. Renegade ideas about the Christian life were in the air in central Europe in the 1520s.

The first visible community of those we call Anabaptists came into being in the Swiss canton of Zurich. There a group of “young Turks” became deeply convinced about the church as a community of those who had died and risen with Christ in believer’s baptism.

On January 31, 1525, some re-baptized themselves in a Zurich apartment and thus gave birth to the Anabaptist movement.

But its emergence can be marked not by a speech or escape from persecutors but by a sequence of seditious liturgical acts that took place soon thereafter, during the last week of January. In the first recorded instance, two seekers, Johannes and Fridli, have become more and more convinced of the radical position. Suddenly they stop in front of a public well. Fridli says to Johannes, “You have shown me the truth. I thank you for it and ask for the sign.”

There was no mistaking what was meant. Johannes reaches into the well and sprinkles a handful of water over Fridli’s head. With this deceptively simple gesture the endless debates between reformers and radicals falls silent, answered by an act that seals their fate before God and their persecutors. For those who take it seriously, like Johannes and Fridli, there is a finality to baptism: in submitting to sprinkling of water in the name of the Father Son and Spirit you have answered God’s claim on your life. There is no turning back.

Later in the same week, Johannes the baptizer at the public well was among the people an old farmer

had secretly invited into his house to listen to the radicals. The farmer wanted to hear in their own words how they interpreted disputed Bible passages. As they held forth, one of the guests wept out of conviction and pled to be baptized. The record tells us that the farmer broke into a sweat at this defiant possibility, uncertain what to do if this renegade ritual were to be carried out in his own house. But this was only the beginning. When it seemed to George Blaurock, the first person to

be baptized in that clandestine Zurich ceremony, that a oneness of conviction had settled on the group, he reached across the kitchen table for the loaf of bread and jug of wine still sitting there from the last meal. He then called out, “He who believes that God has redeemed him through his death and rose colored blood, let him come and eat with me of the bread and drink with me of the wine.”

As a student of ritual, I would love to know exactly what Blaurock read or said after that. People in Christian Zurich had known from childhood that the most awesome ritual

a Christian could be part of was the Eucharist. But to participate without a priest and outside of church was unimaginable. To eat bread broken from the same loaf and sip wine from the same cup bound these kitchen radicals to Christ as Savior and one another as brothers as nothing else could have done. The endless arguments ended not in words but in a gesture. In breaking holy bread together, the radicals had broken with an old form of church and created a new one before their very eyes.

This story comes from *Brothers in Christ* by Fritz Blanke, pp. 21-28.

With this deceptively
simple gesture the
endless debates
between reformers
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The dog days of winter



**PHOTO
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The family of Mennonite Board of Missions workers Hilda and Mahlon Stoltzfus utilize traditional Alaskan transportation: the dogsled, circa 1960. The Stoltzfuses served in Alaska from 1952 to 1961, leading an MBM voluntary service unit in the village of Russian Mission in the southwest part of the state. The General Conference Mennonite Church considered Alaska as its first mission field in 1879 before deciding on Oklahoma the following year. The state's first and only Mennonite Church USA congregation, Prince of Peace Mennonite Church in Anchorage, was started in 1978.

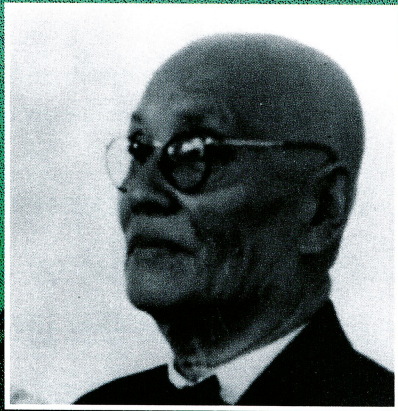


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Mennonite Historical Bulletin

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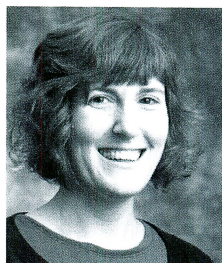
Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee



The first foreign mission field:

Stories of suffering, faithfulness and growth.

When faith meets Flickr



Colleen McFarland,
interim director,
Mennonite Church USA
Historical Committee

For more than a year, the Mennonite Church USA Archives has been posting materials from its image collections to Flickr, a popular Website for sharing photographs. In the fall of 2010, we embraced Flickr as a partial solution to a challenge faced by archivists and museum curators: the question of how to effectively manage digital copies of historic photographs created in the process of answering research questions, preparing exhibitions, and illustrating publications. Flickr allows us to “reuse” those digital scans, sharing them with thousands of people worldwide. By the time this issue of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* reaches you, the images posted to the Mennonite Church USA Flickr site will have received more than 100,000 views. If you want to add to that number, take a look at our Flickr photostream: www.flickr.com/photos/mennonitechurchusa-archives/

There are plenty of other archival software packages we could have chosen to mount our digitized images online. But those software packages cannot offer to us what Flickr does: an online community of image lovers and image sharers who expect to interact with the photographs they find online. The interactions between Web users and archives staff that Flickr enables are priceless.

We are notified whenever anybody chooses one of our images as a “favorite” or places it in a public gallery. Web users comment on our photographs, telling stories related to the images they find, asking questions about the images, and identifying people and places portrayed. Some images evoke heartfelt, intimate tributes to departed relatives or former congregations. Others elicit expressions of gratitude for Mennonites who traveled halfway around the world to provide aid to strangers in a time of need. And a few photographs seem to be adored for their peculiarity—such as the photographs of plain-coated American Mennonites posing with a tapir in 1930s Paraguay.

Our decision to share our photos with a vibrant online community is affirmed every time a Flickr user “favorites” or comments on one of our photographs. Flickr allows the Mennonite Church USA Archives to introduce (or reintroduce) to the world to a faith tradition that treasures and inspires active Christian discipleship. Through Flickr, we show that Mennonites don’t simply talk about Christian love and charity, but rather take those words seriously enough to follow through with acts of Christian love and charity.

Whenever a Flickr user expresses surprise or amazement at the photographic evidence of globetrotting Mennonites, the archives staff follows up with a brief comment explaining why the Mennonites were abroad—to rebuild homes after an earthquake, to assist with the resettlement of refugees, or to offer post-war food and material aid relief.

As a non-ethnic Mennonite, I joined the Mennonite Church because of its authentic Christianity. To put it simply, the Mennonites I knew made me want to be a better person. I trust that, in some small way, similar thoughts also cross the minds of the thousands of Flickr users perusing our historical photographs.

Whenever a Flickr user expresses surprise or amazement at the photographic evidence of globetrotting Mennonites, the archives staff follows up with a brief comment explaining why the Mennonites were abroad.

Staff change

Rich Preheim, who was serving as director of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee and Archives, resigned effective April 2, 2012. Colleen McFarland, archivist, is serving as the interim director.

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A failed 19th-century attempt to create a Mennonite general conference

General Conference Mennonite Church



Mennonite Church General Conference



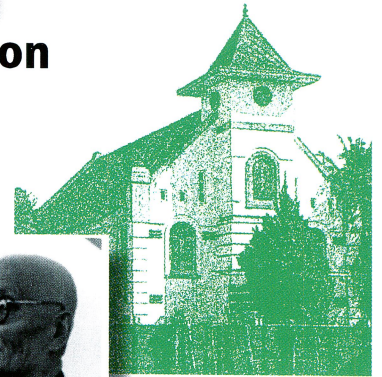
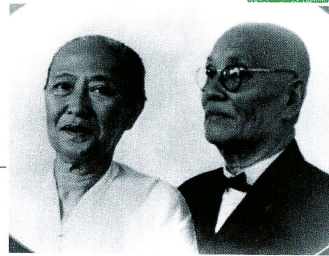
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They went forth and multiplied

How Indonesian Mennonites expanded from their Dutch mission origins.



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Titanic witness



**Mennonite
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USA**

Historical
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On the cover: Tee Siem Tat, Charles Christano and Mesach Krisetya, leaders in the Indonesian Mennonite church movement.

North Newton archivist holds record for high score on certification exam



Thiesen

In the archival profession, the word *record* usually refers to a document containing information. But for John Thiesen, archivist at the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee's archives in North Newton, Kan., record has another meaning. He owns the highest score ever on the Academy of Certified Archivists' certification exam. Although not reported until the most recent issue of *Archival Outlook* magazine, Thiesen posted his record setting-score

in 1997 when he correctly answered 94 of the 100 questions.

The exam asks questions, all multiple choice, regarding a wide range of archives-related topics, such as:

- It has been said, "The French Revolution mark[ed] the beginning of a new era in archives administration." Which of the following developments makes the French Revolution such a watershed in archival history? Answer: It was during this time that the principle of the accessibility of archival records to the public was established.
- Which type of microfilm has the longest life expectancy? Answer: Silver halide.

- Which one of the following categories of records is expressly covered by the United States Freedom of Information Act? Answer: Records of the executive branch of the federal government.
- The newly hired archivist of a local historical society in a town of 10,000 people wishes to raise funds for publicity and outreach. What's the archivist's first step? Answer: Assess the institution's mission and goals.

Accreditation is good for five years, and Thiesen is planning to take the exam again this year. He has been the archivist in North Newton since 1990.

Canadian committee seeks alternate celebration of War of 1812 bicentennial

Between 1812 and 1814, the United States, having declared war on Great Britain, repeatedly tried and failed to gain control of Canada. Fast-forward to the 21st century, and the bicentennial of the start of the War of 1812 is cause for much celebration, particularly in Ontario, which took the brunt of the U.S. invasions. Some Canadians, however, don't think such festivities are warranted. Jonathan Seiling, a Mennonite and historian, suggests that instead it should be a time of "remorseful lamentation on the very existence of war."

Seiling and Carol Penner, pastor of First Mennonite Church in Vineland, Ont., are leading the 1812 Bicentennial Peace Committee to prepare alternate commemorations. The committee has representation from Canadian Mennonites, Brethren in Christ and Quakers.

"The stated intent [of the official celebration] is generally to appreciate that the Canada-U.S. border has, for the most



"The Death of General Pike at the Battle of York (Montreal). American engraving, 1839."

part, enjoyed 200 years of noncombatant activity," Seiling writes in *Ontario Mennonite History* the newsletter "Yet rather than giving an ear to those pioneers of peace and nonresistance who actually resisted the war, it is a rehearsing of battles that remains the main focus."

In 1793, the Mennonites, Brethren in Christ and Quakers in what is now Ontario were granted exemptions from military service but had to pay additional taxes. Men-

nonites could also have their horses, wagons and other resources pressed into service. After one battle, in which American soldiers were pursuing British retreating from Detroit, at least 22 Mennonites claimed losses including two horses, 14 wagons, 17 harnesses, five blankets, 54 bags and two yokes.

The 1812 Bicentennial Committee's plans include conferences and workshops and a bike tour of pertinent sites. Each of the three peace churches will also erect a com-

memorative marker. The Mennonite marker will be at First Mennonite Church in Vineland, adjacent to an existing monument to the first Mennonites' arrival in Canada in 1786.

In the United States, the War of 1812 affected Mennonites very little. In Lancaster County, Pa., deacon Martin Mellinger reported that no Mennonites have been called up to the militia nor were they compelled to pay anything than the normal taxes in support of the war effort.

To the Freemen of Lancaster County.

requirements at the time, the candidate with the most votes would be president while the runner-up would be vice president. It took a week of wrangling for the house to finally declare Jefferson the winner. – *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*

[illegible]

Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage.

The forced exodus did not solve the problem, and Bern, while growing increasingly tolerant, continued to take measures against the Anabaptists clear into the 19th century. In 1824, for example, authorities required members to receive governmental approval for meetings and assessed heavily penalties on converts to the faith, among other directives. – *Canadian Mennonite*

A stylized illustration featuring two political symbols: an elephant on the left and a donkey on the right. Both animals are depicted in a dark, textured silhouette. The elephant's back is decorated with three white stars, and the donkey's back is decorated with four white stars. The background is a light, textured green.

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A failed 19th-century attempt to create a Mennonite general conference

Rockingham Co. 1st February 8th 1853

[illegible]

Courtesy of Elwood E. Voder

He promoted a general conference for two reasons. First, Mennonites had traveled

But he also admitted it “necessary for us to hold meetings in order to stand by each other and to visit each other so that we remain more alike in our practices, so that we do not stray from time to time from our confession of faith.”

far from their original settlements in eastern Pennsylvania, and he believed a conference of leaders would be good for church unity, support and encouragement to counter geographic separation. In a letter to Burkholder, Jacob Lehman, another Lancaster bishop, commented on the Virginian’s “opinions about our little flock that is, as you say, scattered over a great part of the United States” and agreed with his assessment because “I have seen [the scattering] to a fairly large degree myself.”² Burkholder was just one of many bishops and ministers who traveled extensively to these far-flung communities, which often did not have resident ministerial leadership.³ Jost Bally, a Mennonite minister in Illinois, wrote Burkholder to see if something could be done about the lack of leadership for the brothers and sisters in Greene County, Ill.⁴ An association of ministers that met regularly could generate advice and counsel about such issues.

The second reason was the setting in which Virginia Mennonites found themselves in the years before the American Civil War. Burkholder was attuned to life and culture in the 1850s and was well aware of the fractious national debate about slavery and states’ rights.⁵ With their nonresistant and anti-slavery beliefs, the Mennonites lived in contrast to many in the Shenandoah Valley.⁶ About 12 percent of Rockingham County residents were slaves, according to the 1850 U.S. Census.⁷ Thirteen years earlier, Burkholder’s bishop father, Peter Burkholder Jr., had written against owning slaves.⁸ In 1853 and 1854, slavery was a point of extensive discussion in the Virginia Church of the Brethren, resulting in the group reiterating a clear stance against the practice. That helped make nonconformist groups outsiders in the state. Again, the counsel of other church leaders could be valuable.

Less than two months after sending his letter to Zimmerman, Burkholder received a reply. The Lancaster bishop wrote that he had discussed the idea of a general conference with four other ministers and had declined to “recommend it for the present.” But Zimmerman also stated it wasn’t dead: “We are not united on the matter at present. ... We don’t want to say a definite no to it. As much as possible, we want to hold to the evangelical and apostolic word, and if you and others do the same, we will not be far apart.”¹⁰

Undeterred, Burkholder and his father-in-law, Samuel Shank Sr., who was also a bishop, headed north in late May 1853. Between sermons, Burkholder and Shank talked to bishops and ministers about the idea of a general conference of Mennonites. The duo traveled to Pennsylvania and Ohio before going to Ontario, then back to Ohio and on to Indiana and possibly Illinois before returning home to the Shenandoah Valley in July.

After the trip, Bishop Dilman Meyer from Ontario counseled Burkholder and

Shank to pursue a general conference with “the greatest caution.” He wrote that all ministers must be consulted before proceeding and that congregations need to be asked if they will help fund a general conference. But he also admitted it was “necessary for us to hold meetings in order to stand by each other and to visit each other so that we remain more alike in our practices, so that we do not stray from time to time from our confession of faith.” Nevertheless, Meyer advised Burkholder and Shank that a general conference will take time to develop and that “we must first visit each other and get well acquainted.”¹¹ The Virginians had, of course, visited Meyer during their trip five months earlier.

Lancaster bishop Jacob Lehman also favored ministers visiting each other in regular church meetings and minister’ meetings but thought that a general conference would fall into the hands of the “youngest servants” because a conference would “make for long and troublesome and costly and difficult travels so that the old and experienced servants would perhaps stay at home.” He used the story of King Solomon’s son, who took the counsel of the young and “forsook the counsel of the old ones.” The 53-year-old Lehman also quoted from Job 12:12 and 1 Peter 5:5, which state that the young should submit to the old and that wisdom abides with the grandfathers. Furthermore, Lehman believed that if things “should ever go wrong within that counsel” of a general conference, “where would we start to fix them up again?”¹²

Burkholder and Shank, possibly accompanied by a third Virginia bishop, Jacob Hildebrand,¹³ made another northern trip in 1857, visiting Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Ontario and New York. Later that year,

Continued on page 9

General Conference X 2 =

General Conference Mennonite Church



General Conference Mennonite Church delegates in front of Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church near Goessel, Kan. in August, 1886.

The study of North American Mennonite history has been hampered by two words: general conference. Until they merged to form Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, the names of the two largest denominations both prominently featured that phrase, confusing both Mennonites and non-Mennonites for years.

Since at least the mid-19th century, the “old” Mennonites, primarily Swiss and the first arrivals in the New World, had batted around the idea of a “general conference,” that is, an assembly that meets to discuss and discern a broad range of church matters. But those two words were officially claimed in 1860 when several independent Mennonite groups, mostly Bavarian and recent arrivals to America, created a denomination called the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of

Mennonite



The Mennonite Church General Conference

North America, signify General Conference M

Meanwhile, the “c wide delegate assembly, General Conference for Conference participant denominational structure was abolished in ing was renamed the M

Confusion

te Church General Conference



Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen

al Conference met in a tent at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church near Wakarusa, Ind. in 1917.

ing its intent to be inclusive all Mennonites. The name was changed to theennonite Church in 1953.

ld” Mennonite concept finally became reality in 1898, when the first church- was held at Wakarusa, Ind., and adopted the name Mennonite Church

r their biennial meetings. The name continued to be used as the General

s appointed workers for various tasks. It subsequently began to morph into a

re rather than just a regular gathering of ordained men. The General Confer-

1971 as part of a larger denominational restructuring and the delegate gather-

Mennonite Church General Assembly. – *Rich Preheim*

Lancaster bishop John Brubacher reported to Burkholder on developments at the conference’s fall session: “[T]here was no stink there and all confessed unity to keep house with the old foundation.”¹⁴ The idea of a general conference had faded by the time Burkholder died on December 18, 1860, from acute rheumatism at the age of 43. His vision wouldn’t be realized until nearly 40 years later.

Elwood E. Yoder is a history and Bible teacher at Eastern Mennonite High School in Harrisonburg, Va., and the author of Margaret’s Print Shop: A Novel of the Anabaptist Reformation and co-author of Through Fire and Water: An Overview of Mennonite History.

A Vision Delayed endnotes

- 1 Martin Burkholder to Jacob Zimmerman, February 8, 1853, Jacob Hostetter collection, HM 1-193, box 2, folder 18, Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, Ind.
- 2 Jacob Lehman letter to Martin Burkholder, February 22, 1856, Martin Burkholder collection, I-MS-9, Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives, Harrisonburg, Va.
- 3 See for instance Peter Nissley’s letter to Martin Burkholder, February 6, 1856, and John Lapp’s letter to Burkholder February 7, 1860, in Martin Brubaker collection, I-MS-9, Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives.
- 4 Jost Bally to Martin Burkholder, February 16, 1858, , Martin Brubaker collection, I-MS-9, Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives.
- 5 Harry A. Brunk wrote about the progressive character of Martin Burkholder in *History of Mennonites in Virginia, 1727-1900*, volume I (Harrisonburg, Va.: H.A. Brunk, 1959), pp. 100-103. See also the extensive Federal Claims Commissions proceedings from 1872, which narrates the Burkholder family’s beliefs and wealth during the Civil War, in David S. Rodas and Norman R. Wenger, *Unionists and the Civil War Experience*, volume III (Harrisonburg, Va.: Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center, 2005), pp. 601-614.
- 6 Stephen L. Longenecker develops the thesis of Mennonites and Brethren being “outsiders” in *Shenandoah Religion: Outsiders and the Mainstream, 1716-1865* (Waco, Texas: Baylor Press, 2002). See especially the chapter on “The Slavery Debate, pp. 113-151.
- 7 Ibid., p. 115.
- 8 Ibid., p. 419.
- 9 Ibid., p. 141-142.
- 10 Jacob Zimmerman to Martin Burkholder, March 25, 1853, Martin Brubaker collection, I-MS-9, Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives.
- 11 Dilman Meyer to Martin Burkholder and Samuel Shank, November 21, 1853, Martin Brubaker collection, I-MS-9, Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives.
- 12 Jacob Lehman to Martin Burkholder, February 22, 1856, Martin Burkholder collection, I-MS-9, Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives.
- 13 See December 15, 1857, letter from Jacob Snyder to Martin Burkholder and January 1858 letter from John Lapp to Martin Burkholder, Martin Brubaker collection, I-MS-9, Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives.
- 14 Johannes Brubacher to Martin Burkholder, October 27, 1857, Martin Brubaker collection, I-MS-9, Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives.

They went forth and multiplied

How Indonesian Mennonites expanded from their Dutch mission origins.

By Adhi Dharma

After more than 300 years as an exclusively Western church, Mennonites set out for their first overseas mission field in the mid-19th century. Dutch Mennonites founded the Doopsgezinde Zending Vereniging (DZV) to proclaim the Gospel in the Netherlands' foreign possessions. Four years later they sent Pieter Jansz and his wife, Wilhelmina Frederica Schmilau, to Indonesia. Their work on the island of Java was the genesis of today's Indonesian Mennonite population of 90,000 in three organized bodies.

The oldest of these bodies, called synods, is the Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa (Javanese Evangelical Church) or GITJ, and grew directly out of the DZV's work on the island of Java. By the 1920s, the new believers' autonomy had become a prominent issue, with congregations starting to select their own ministers and assuming increasing responsibility for their finances. But it became unavoidable on September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, starting World War II and throwing Europe into upheaval. A May 30, 1940, meeting was held to plan for the transition to local leadership – just 20 days after Indonesia's relationship with the Netherlands was cut by the German invasions of the Low Countries and France. Patunggilan Pasamuwan Kristen



GITJ minister Sugeng Gombak ordains Samuel Setianto in a 1969 ceremony. Indonesian Mennonites started calling their own pastors as early as the 1920s.

Mennonite Church USA Archives-Coshen

Tata Injil ing Karesidenan Pati, Kudus lan Djepara was chosen as the Javanese Mennonites body's new name. Daniel Amstutz, a Swiss Mennonite missionary in Indonesia since 1934, and Karl Gramberg, a Dutch physician and director of the DZV's medical mission, were appointed chair and assistant chair, respectively, for the transition process. The total membership of the Javanese congregations had reached 5,000 adults by this time. Amstutz and Gramberg stepped down from their positions the next year to turn over leadership to the local church.

The churches were severely tested in the first years of autonomy. Japan's invasion of Indonesia in 1942 caused social and governmental turmoil. The Dutch colonial government began to collapse, and without effective authority, there was looting and killing in many places. An organization of hardline Muslim youth known as Ansor used the opportunity to wage holy war, trying to force Christians, considered infidels and spies for the Dutch, to return to Islam. This flared into violence and torture, including circumcising men en masse and raping women.

On March 8, 1942, the Ansor youth planned to seize Gramberg at the mission hospital in Tayu. But he learned of the plan and slipped away with his family. With Gramberg's departure, Ong Yong Soen, a Muslim physician, remained at the hospital with several nurses and a handful of patients. The nurses advised Ong to also flee, but he refused, saying, "It's not necessary to be afraid; I'll be out in front." When the gang attacked the hospital, Ong quickly became the first target after Gramberg couldn't be found. As if possessed by an evil spirit, the Ansor dragged out Ong, cut him badly and threw his glasses into a fire set to burn the hospital. But Ong did not die. Among those in the crowd was one person who took him to safety in front of a nearby shop. The name of this person was not known, but many people believed that he was sent by God to save Ong.

GITJ leaders were seized, but through the help of God, their captors quarreled among themselves and finally the leaders of the church were freed.

Elsewhere, H.C. Heusdens, administrator of the DZV's leprosarium at Donorodjo, was given the choice by the Ansor to deny his faith or be killed. He refused to deny his faith and so was tortured and killed. The leaders of the congregations were captured and forced to recant and become Muslims. Soedjuna Harsosoedirdjo, Samuel Hadi Wardjo and other local GITJ leaders were seized, but through the help of God, their captors quarreled among themselves and finally the leaders of the church were freed.

In 1945, in their first synod meeting after World War II, the Javanese Mennonite congregations became the Association of Christian Congregations in the Muria Area (Patoenggilan Pasamoewan Kristen Sekitar Muria). The name was changed in 1948 to Javanese Christian Church in the Muria Area (Gereja Kristen Jawa di Sekitar Muria). It is interesting to observe that the new name adopted the word *gereja* (church) where it formerly had been *pasamoewan* (congregation). In 1949, the name Javanese Evangelical Church (Geredja Indjili di Tanah Djawa) appeared. Adapted to the modern Indonesian spelling, the name today is Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa.

At the 1949 synod meeting, S. P. Poerbawijoga, a noted Reformed theologian and church leader from Yogyakarta, asserted that the GITJ could not stand by itself because of the suffering it had endured and because the

work was not going smoothly. He proposed that the GITJ join his body, the Central Java Christian Church. The offer was refused by the synod. Even though the total membership had declined to 2,000, less than half before the war, the congregations still hoped to be revitalized. Two things were necessary for that to happen: First, they needed to immediately develop leadership. Second, they needed structure and organization.

In 1957, Poerbawijoga had revise his assessment. He acknowledged that the GITJ was developing well, with graduates of its theological school now ready to serve the congregations. The GITJ had grown to 11 congregations with 2,410 adult members and 2,850 children.

...

While what became the GITJ was maturing on Java, another group was emerging in the area. Its members were ethnic Chinese, a people who had been migrating to Indonesia since the 13th century. But they long had difficulties entering into mainstream society due to language and cultural differences. Their general economic success also often made them reviled by their indigenous neighbors. Early Mennonite mission efforts to reach the local Chinese were largely unsuccessful.

In 1917, Tee Siem Tat, a Confucian and successful businessman, converted to Christianity and became a powerful evangelist. He soon had a group of Chinese converts regularly meeting in his home in the city of Kudus. They tried to find a denomination to join but found the options lacking. The Salvation Army's baptismal ceremony used a flag, which was not biblical, according to Tee. The Adventists approached him, but he didn't agree with their teachings about the Sabbath and about food, which he considered too rigid. An independent missionary organization in Salatiga, about 60 miles to the south, seemed promising, but distance and language were prohibitive. The Salatiga

group, however, contacted the DZV, which was geographically closer, and the DZV then contacted Tee.

Tee's group decided to join with the Mennonites, who were open and ready to serve the Chinese community. Tee and his group also found teaching that fit with their beliefs stressing the Bible. Tee began to study Mennonite beliefs, including believer's baptism and a way of life that emphasized practical living and peace and rejected violence. The church was understood as a community that separated itself from political and government matters and strove to live with values of a liberating love.

Learning from Anabaptism's 16th-century origins, Tee and 25 friends made their confession of faith and were baptized on December 6, 1920, by missionary Nicolai Thiessen at Tee's home. The group increased quickly, reaching the areas around Kudus. On September 27, 1925, the Kudus group took the step of forming a congregation by choosing candidates for leadership. They requested permission from the government and two years later, on February 3, 1927, a decision titled *Chineesche Doopsgezinde Christengemeente* was handed down from the governor of the Dutch Indies. Tee and Oei Then Gie were recognized as leaders, making them the official pastors of the congregation.

Tee began to see urban mission among the Chinese as his calling and began working in areas around Java's Mount Muria and crossing ethnic lines. He wrote a letter in the name of the Kudus Mennonite Church to four Mennonite missionaries requesting that the Kudus congregation be given responsi-

bility to serve the local Chinese, Ambonese, Menadonese and Javanese. The missionaries, however, replied that they expected him to work only with the Chinese. Tee died on October 2, 1940, leaving eight congregations in the Muria area as the fruits of his labor.

A regional structure was important to provide communication and networking among congregations in the Muria area, especially because during these years the social, economic and political situation in Indonesia was not stable. Like their Javanese sisters and brothers, the Chinese were also persecuted by Muslim fundamentalists. The

church experienced a drastic decline, with several congregations eventually disappearing. After the war and the Indonesian declaration of independence on August 17, 1945, the formation of a district structure was one solution for uniting and caring for the community, which had been threatened with being torn apart and scattered because of the cruel treatment members had experienced. The Chinese congregations in the Muria area met April 18-22, 1948, to formalize the administrative structure that organized the Chinese Mennonite Christian Church. The meeting is considered the first session of the

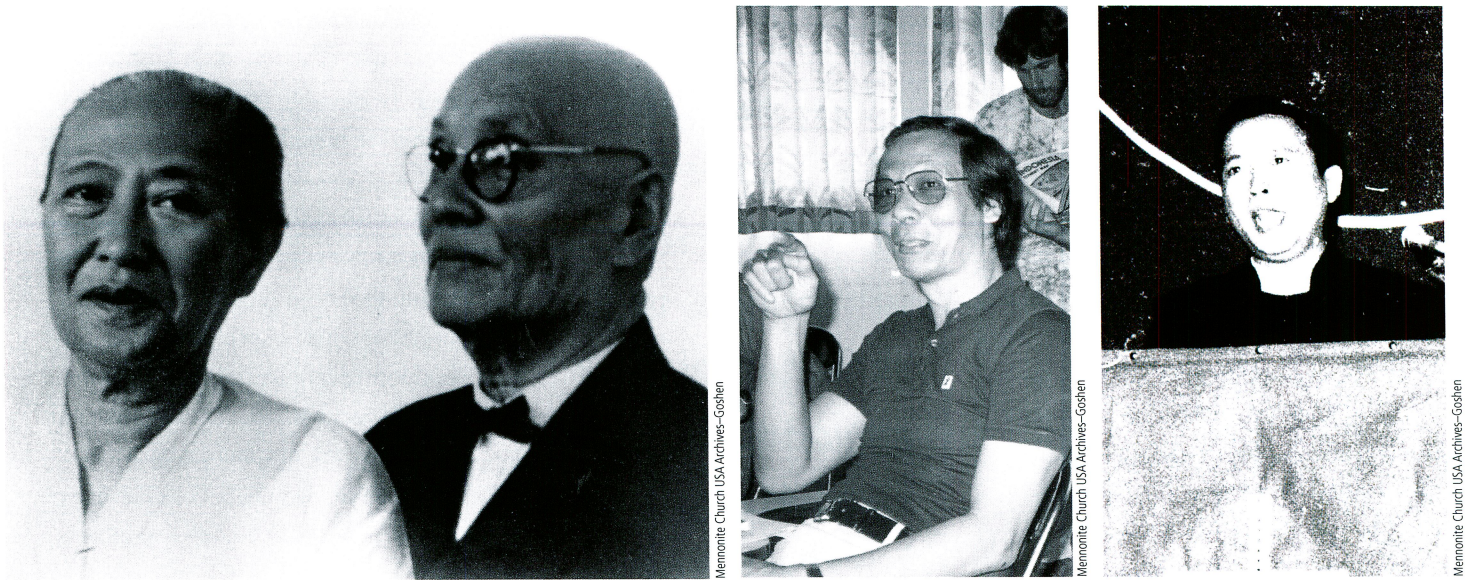


Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen



Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen

Top: The Tayu Christian Hospital in 1964, which had been founded by Dutch Mennonite missionaries. During a Muslim uprising in 1942, a gang attacked the hospital looking for director Karl Gramberg. Bottom: The first Chinese Mennonite church (left) stands next to its replacement in Kudus on the island of Java, circa 1960. The first building was erected in 1928, three years after the congregation was organized. The second church was built in 1941.



Left: Tee Siem Tat (left) and his wife, Sie Djoen Nio. After converting to Christianity, Tee evangelized widely among the Chinese on Java in the 1920s and '30s, leading to the creation of the GKMI Mennonite synod. Center: Mesach Krisetya. Right: Charles Christano. Krisetya and Christano, in addition to being church leaders in Indonesia, were also presidents of Mennonite World Conference. Indonesia is the only country other than the United States to have two people to serve as president.

association and marked a new phase in the Chinese congregations' organization. They became independent and began to distance themselves from the Mennonite mission. Additionally, several Dutch terms were replaced with Chinese, such as *Kerkeraad*, or church council, which became *tong huwee*.

The district structure would play an important role in the growth of the Muria Chinese churches. All decisions involving their life together would be discussed and formalized at the district assemblies. In 1958, the Chinese Mennonite Christian Church became Muria Christian Church of Indonesia (Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia, or GKMI). The name change became important in view of other changes at that time. Using Chinese terms was not to their benefit, given the strong Indonesian spirit of nationalism that was accompanied by anti-Chinese feelings. The Muria Chinese churches had to change and become open beyond the limits of ethnic Chinese. Also, many Chinese were forced to use Indonesian family names.

• • •

Although the Jemaat Kristen Indonesia (JKI, or Christian Congregation in Indonesia) is

the youngest offspring of the Mennonite movement in Indonesia, it has achieved the greatest growth. In less than 40 years, the JKI has planted more 50 congregations with 45,000 members. They cover cities around Mount Muria in Central Java, as well as in East and West Java. Several congregations are found abroad, in locations ranging from Los Angeles to the Philippines.

A great revival among the primarily GKMI youth around Mount Muria in the 1960s produced various forms of ministry, especially in missions. The GKMI youth also initiated many forms of fellowship. One of them was a group organized by Adi Sutanto, a future JKI chair, for the purpose of generating funds and support for a friend studying at the Baptist seminary in Semarang. The group was named Keluarga Sangkakala (Trumpet Family), after the name of a GKMI choir in the 1950s. By early 1967, the number of participants had grown to 30 people. Many members who pursued higher education in urban areas such as Semarang, Yogyakarta, Salatiga, Bandung and Jakarta were eager to initiate new fellowships, sometimes leading to the creation of GKMI congregations.

Since 1965, new evangelizing organiza-

tions have been founded such as the Evangelism and Charity Foundation (PIPKA), the musical team All for Christ, a non-profit Christian radio broadcast and others. The drive toward new forms of ministry was beyond GKMI's capacity, as in those years the synod concentrated efforts on better internal structural, budgetary organization and enhancement of human resources. Lack of appreciation by senior GKMI leaders toward the younger generation's movement was apparent. They showed reluctance to support many youth programs that, for the senior leaders, seemed unrealistic or not urgent.

In 1970, senior GKMI leaders proposed a merger between Sangkakala and PIPKA, as the main and official mission bodies of the synod. The idea was rejected and a silent confrontation took place between the synod office and both Sangkakala and PIPKA. PIPKA's activity came to a standstill and suffered for a period, as the synod office stopped allocating funds. Finally in 1972, Sangkakala joined with the All for Christ musical team to form Christopherus as an interdenominational evangelistic ministry. This fusion recharged spirits to reach more youth. It carried on dynamic programs and

made great strides in a relatively short span of time. Enthusiasm to rekindle the flame of 1967 was still present in the hearts of many Sangkakala alumni.

Sangkakala did come back. Adi Sutanto returned to Indonesia in 1976 after three years of study at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va., Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, Calif., and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. He was asked to create a new mission organization like Sangkakala. The new initiative was founded the next spring. It worked separately from PIPKA and Christopherus and had seven full-time staff members by the end of the decade.

But the new program was opposed fervently by many senior GKMI leaders, who regarded it as a competing evangelizing body. Beginning in mid-1977, the group conducted evangelistic meetings. In order to attract attention and support of villagers, the foundation rented a projector and some Christian films. Through this program, hundreds of people were saved and two little fellowships planted, which later became congregations. In June 1978, an activist named Billy Sindoro proposed evangelism by distribution of cassette tapes. He recorded sermons and reproduced them for free distribution. The cassettes served as an opening path for a yet bigger harvest through mass revival sermons. A free monthly periodical was launched in 1979, and a bookstore opened in Semarang in 1981. A band to minister to youth through popular music was begun in 1977, and a choir was started the next year. A scholarship fund for theological students was launched, and used clothing was collected and distributed in needy areas.

Oikoumene Night was launched on March 1, 1979, in Semarang, with 400 men and women declaring their willingness to receive Christ. Five months later, a grand revival resulted in 2,186 people responding to the call for repentance. The flame reached surrounding places such as Kudus, Pati,

Many members who pursued higher education in urban areas such as Semarang, Yogyakarta, Salatiga, Bandung and Jakarta were eager to initiate new fellowships, sometimes leading to the creation of GKMI congregations.

Tayu, Jepara, Salatiga, Magelang, Yogyakarta, Surakarta and many other small towns. Starting in 1981, crusade teams were dispatched to other countries, including Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and South Korea.

The movement grew bigger and bigger, necessitating a legally recognized foundation to administer it. They could no longer use GKMI as its umbrella, as the youth-driven movement (only some of the participants were from the GKMI) had been actively working beyond the structure and coordination of the synod and became an inter-denominational body. On November 1, 1979, the Sangkakala Foundation was officially registered.

Rapid growth in the fellowship, which initially met at Adi Sutanto's house, made it necessary for the gathering to divide. By mid-1981, the number of prayer groups had climbed to 35, each attended by 20-60

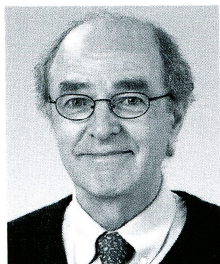
people and led by lay members. Three years later there were 40 groups with a total membership of 1,600, all of them within the boundaries of Semarang. Some prayer groups were begun outside the city, but they grew more slowly compared with those in Semarang. Activities within the prayer groups were similar with those of a house church, practicing an informal liturgy. There was praise and worship, prayer, Bible reading, a sermon, witnessing, offering and a conclusion with relaxed fellowship (enjoying tea and snacks). This kind of fellowship model was popular in the 1970s and '80s.

The creation of a new church became an urgent priority, because each person won to Christ by the Sangkakala crusade team had to be kept and nurtured. On March 4, 1979, some new believers were baptized in Ungaran. This became the cornerstone of the JKI synod. The name adopted for the maiden congregation was JKI Maranatha, which had 40 members. By March 1983, the congregation purchased a larger building and had some 300 members. Fellowships of rural people in remote locations, won through evangelization and movie nights, later became mature churches; congregations in Semarang and Los Angeles have also been declared mature. The new churches have adopted new evangelism models, namely through the formation of new house fellowships, the assignment of workers or servants to new places and speeding up the transition from mission post to mature church.

Adhi Dharma is a pastor and general secretary of the GKMI synod in Indonesia.

Excerpted and adapted with permission from *Churches Engaging Asian Traditions*, the fourth book in the Global Mennonite History series, published by Good Books and Pandora Press, 2011.

Telling the truth in love?



John D. Rempel, professor of theology and Anabaptist studies, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

They shared a belief in the pure church but grappled better with the tension between taking our fallenness seriously yet believing that growth in grace is possible.

Anabaptism began as a charismatic movement, a series of explosions of conviction bent on restoring apostolic Christianity. Very soon it became clear that this intensity had to be channeled so that communities would be stable enough to survive. As a priesthood of believers local congregations made many decisions themselves but also had surprisingly well developed networks that gathered to make decisions that effected one or more streams of the movement. Also surprising was the speedy development of an ordered ministry.

Why were the Dutch, or northerners, hit harder by this trend than the southerners, the German speaking groups spread from the Alsace to Moravia? One reason is circumstantial, the other theological. The Dutch were hard pressed from without (persecution) and within (small groups of people advocating violence long after the violent Anabaptist rule of the town of Muenster had ended). To root out dissent that threatened the movement's existence beleaguered leaders took away the power of congregations to discern together, to the point of making a collective of elders unaccountable to the congregation or region.

A distinctive theological conviction legitimated this severe approach to discipline. Menno and the other northern leaders adopted a 'celestial flesh christology'. It taught that Christ entered the world with celestial (unfallen) flesh. This unfallen flesh of Jesus became the model for his followers. Thus, the goal of discipleship was 'deification', taking on the character of God. The church was to be made up of people 'without spot or wrinkle' (Eph.5:27). So, if we continue to sin it is not because we are creatures of flesh and blood (Heb.2:14) but because we have not chosen the purity of life God offers.

In the concern for a church without spot or wrinkle Menno had been more moderate than the other elders. This was no doubt because he retained a deep sense of his own sinfulness and fallibility. But he was not strong enough to resist the pressure of

perfectionists in the movement. Discipline became less and less a means of helping strugglers stay on the path toward holiness and more and more a means of banning people who didn't meet 'celestial flesh' standards. Protests arose within the congregations but they were seen as acts of disobedience.

Other branches of Anabaptism became alarmed at the extremism of the Dutch. They shared a belief in the pure church but grappled better with the tension between taking our fallenness seriously yet believing that growth in grace is possible. One reason for their greater balance was orthodox Christology, which asserted that Christ had taken our sinful nature upon himself. Thus, salvation was the slow purifying of our sinful nature not our transcending of it in this life.

Because all the Anabaptist groups had a precarious existence extreme behavior by one group could endanger the safety of others. A clear sense emerged that the celestial flesh belief and practice of the Dutch exceeded the commands of Scripture and in the process wounded many sincere believers. In 1557 over fifty elders and ministers from all the German speaking regions met in Strasbourg for a third time. They considered a letter from Menno urging their support of the Dutch leadership in its defense of the ban, even between spouses. Instead the southerners were of one mind against that practice. Two delegates, Lemke and Zylis, undertook the arduous journey from southern to northern Germany to talk the matter over with Menno.

By the time the delegates left, they and Menno thought they had arrived at a common mind but their subsequent letter made clear that the northerners had gone too far. Menno was shocked at this judgment by the wider church. And in turn, the protesters in his own midst (in the Waterland region) were shocked at his intransigence and confirmed in their dissent. They grasped the link between the view of Christ among the Dutch leadership and its consequences for their view of the church and put aside the ban as well as the celestial flesh theology that had legitimated the ban.

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Titanic witness



Mennonite Historical Committee/Newton Archives

Annie Funk (back left) and the rest of the General Conference Mennonite Church missionaries in India pose for a photo, circa 1909. A native of Berks County, Pennsylvania, Funk had been in India for six years when, in 1912, she was called home because of her mother's illness. The ship she was supposed to take from England to the United States was delayed, but Funk was able to book passage on the maiden voyage of the infamous Titanic. She became one of 1,517 fatalities when the liner struck an iceberg and sank on April 15, 1912. Funk reportedly gave up her spot in a lifeboat to a woman with children. A monument was erected in the cemetery of her home congregation, Hereford Mennonite Church at Bally, Pa., and the girls' school she started at Jangjir, India, was renamed the Annie C. Funk Memorial School (which has since closed).



Historical
Committee

Mennonite Historical Bulletin

Vol. LXXIII, No. 3 & 4 • October, 2012

Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee

Final Edition

*For a brief and
shining moment*



**The story of a coffee house
ministry of the Vietnam era**

Thoughts on the future of Mennonite history



Ervin Stutzman,
executive director,
Mennonite Church USA

As executive director for Mennonite Church USA, I'm heartened to see the interest in Mennonite history demonstrated by the young adults who wrote for this issue. Following the pattern from recent years, we've showcased the winner of the annual John Horsch Mennonite History Essay Contest. Each year, these young scholars share insights from Mennonite history that help us understand significant changes in church and society. In this issue, the articles written by three undergraduate students from two of our church schools demonstrate maturity, clear thinking and solid writing. I'll be eager to see how their interest in history may continue to benefit the church.

Recently I had an intriguing conversation with Meg, a young woman who is new to the Mennonite Church. She grew up in a devout Catholic family. Her mother served as a nun for some years before leaving the convent to start a family. Two of her aunts have given their adult lives in service to God through the sisterhood.

Meg is both an attorney and a young mother. She is deeply drawn toward an Anabaptist understanding of community, as well as our focus on social justice. She was quite surprised to learn that Mennonites have not always embraced social justice as part of our corporate values. In fact, the concept of social justice as a responsibility for the Mennonite Church did not gain widespread acceptance until the 1970s. The young people involved in the Civil Rights Movement and the protests against the Vietnam War helped to bring about this shift in our church's values.

Because Meg is exploring a Mennonite approach to peace and social justice, she is interested in the way that events in our history have led to our embrace of these values. My own interest in history has led me to study that history in some depth. In my recent book, *From Nonresistance to Justice* (Herald Press, 2011), I traced a 100-year trajectory (1908–2008) of peacemaking in the Mennonite Church (MC). More specifically, I studied the changes in our corporate rhetoric about peace. Because of the merger of the MCs with the General Conference Mennonite Church in 2001, the historical path includes the transformation of both churches into Mennonite Church USA. Some of our most widely accepted documents, such as "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love," were adopted by both denominations in anticipation of the merger.

Nathan Hersherberger's article in the current issue tells about the young adults in the Concern Movement. Several of these young people played leading roles in the shift from nonresistance to peace and justice. As young adults, both John Howard Yoder and Paul Peachey wrote extensively about these themes in church publications. I'm eager to see how the writers of the next generation will voice their own concerns.

After more than 70 years of publication, this will be the last issue of the Mennonite Historical Bulletin. This doesn't mean, however, that we will stop writing about Mennonite history. Rather, we will publish pieces in a different format. Beginning next fall, we will sponsor a historical theme section in *The Mennonite*, a publication of Mennonite Church USA. Further, we intend to regularly use emerging forms of social media that appeal to a younger audience. Already, our staff at the archives has found a wide and eager audience for the photographs they have published online.

I don't know what our church practices or publications will look like 100 years from now. But I have confidence that God will raise up a generation of young people who can lead the way.

After more than 70 years of publication, this will be the last issue of the Mennonite Historical Bulletin. This doesn't mean, however, that we will stop writing about Mennonite history. Rather, we will publish pieces in a different format.

In this (final) issue



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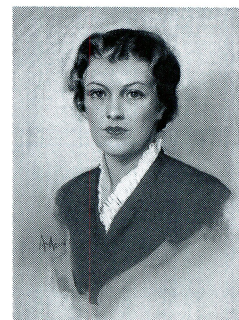
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**Mennonite
Church
USA**

Historical
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On the cover: Partly Dave Coffeehouse on the move. Friends and supporters celebrate one of the several relocations of the Elkhart, Ind. coffeehouse with a candlelighting service and litany. Photo courtesy of AMBS Archives

New Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society Center dedicated

After years of dreaming and planning, the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center was completed this spring. The center, located near Zion Mennonite Church in Hubbard, Ore., houses a library and archives for Pacific Northwest Mennonites.

A dedication ceremony at Zion Mennonite and a ribbon cutting at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center on April 22 provided an opportunity to celebrate the center's opening, and to acknowledge those who worked hard to complete the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center, to revisit the history of the center's development, and to hear a plenary address from Hope Lind, who had—several decades ago—initiated the vision of a library and archives.

The dedication service included congregational singing, led by Don Bacher, and a short presentation by Jerry Barkman, whose term as president of the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society started this spring, replacing Bernard Showalter.

During the planning and construction of the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center, Barkman operated as the general contractor, and so took some time during the dedication service to thank those who worked to complete the building. He said, "we wish to thank our God for the resources He has given to the Society through His people.

"We also wish to give thanks to those who guided the building process and those who used hammer, nails, wood and glass to build a facility that will enable the Society to continue to carry out its mission," Barkman continued.

After a prayer of dedication from Willard Kennel, PNMHS's third president, and congregational singing of "To God be the Glory," the audience made the short walk to the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center. At the center's entrance, the ribbon was cut by Showalter; Richard Kropf, who served as site superintendent and finish carpenter for the center; and a representative of the Kropf family, Claudia Lapp, who is Ivan and Pearl Kropf's daughter.

Larry Passmore was recognized for his contribution: an intricately carved wooden sign that will hang permanently on the center's exterior. New visitors to the center also admired the cherry-top conference table, donated by Barkman and completed by Hope Village residents.

A short tour of the archive and library followed, allowing guests to inspect the archive room and its movable shelving, an innovation that increases the capacity for document storage. The archives are also climate controlled, creating the perfect temperature for document conservation.

Those who visited the cramped quarters of the library and archives at its former location, Western Mennonite High School, remarked on the expansive space at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center. According to conference historian Ray Kauffman the dedication ceremony provided "a rewarding afternoon of gratitude, blessing, and marking of a milestone in the history of our society." —*Our Heritage*: Pacific PCN Historical Society Newsletter

U.S. Archivists launch effort to establish Archivists without Borders chapter

By Colleen McFarland, Mennonite Church USA Archives archivist

GOSHEN, Ind. - A working group of six archivists announced May 1, 2012, their intentions to start a U.S. chapter of Archivists without Borders (AwB). Archivists without Borders is an international organization, the primary objective of which is "cooperation in the sphere of archives work in countries whose documentary heritage is in danger of disappearing or of suffering irreversible damage, with particular emphasis on the protection of human rights."

AwB was formed in Barcelona, Spain, in 1998. In addition, 10 other countries have formed chapters and are affiliated with AwB International. These countries are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay.

While AwB has no formal affiliations with Mennonite individuals or organizations, their work touches upon issues of justice close to the hearts of many in the worldwide Anabaptist community. If you are interested in the work of AwB or would like to learn more about the AwB U.S. chapter, see <http://awbuschapter.wordpress.com/>.

Contact: Colleen McFarland, colleenm@mennoniteusa.org

TAKE FIVE

1949 Winners

John Horsch
Mennonite History Research Contest

- (1) Willard S. Krabill – "A Brief Sketch of the Origins and Growth of the Beech Mennonite Church"
- (2) John A. Hostetler – "An Amish Baptismal Service"
- (3) William E. Heiser – "Sixty Years with East Bend"
- (4) Merna Brenneman – "Conrad Grebel, a Challenge to Modern Youth"
- (5) LeRoy E. Kennel – "Shickley Salem Mennonite Church"

Source: Mennonite Church Historical Committee John Horsch Essay Contest Records, 1949-2011.
I-03-3.5. Mennonite Church USA Archives - Goshen. Goshen, Indiana.

For a brief and shining moment



1972 Art Fair



1968 group

The story of a coffee house ministry of the Vietnam era

by Ted Maust

On the night of January 21, 1973, about 60 people gathered outside a building that was set to be destroyed for the construction of a new bank.¹ The crowd carried candles as they walked through the streets. Two men carried a banner that read “Partly Dave.” A confused state trooper passed and called the Elkhart police to come stop what he assumed was a protest. As the group stopped outside 201 South Main Street in Elkhart, Ind., they began a liturgical chant.

“We had a crisis,” read one of the standard-bearers, “but ...”

“We’re moving,” called back the crowd solemnly.

“We have not closed,” said the leader, “it’s just ...”

“We’re moving,” answered the crowd.

“We’ve made mistakes but ...”

“We’re moving.”

“We have no permanent home.”

“We’re moving.”

The chant continued.² By the time the Elkhart police arrived, the crowd had dispersed.³ Not protesters, those in that elusive crowd were the people of Partly Dave.

A coffee house ministry, Partly Dave⁴ served coffee and ministered to the people of Elkhart, Ind., from 1966 until 1975 when financial difficulties closed its doors. Volunteers and employees embraced nontraditional modes of worship and ministry and responded to the needs of the community, expanding and morphing while constantly returning to the organization’s founding principles for guidance.



Partly Dave was founded within a context of disaffection toward church structures and as a powerful countercultural movement. Yet, as the surrounding city of Elkhart and the broader American culture changed, the strategies of Partly Dave became outdated despite strenuous effort to evolve to fit new and diverse community needs. Someone put it succinctly in 1975 on the pro-con list to decide whether to close or stay open: “We have become an institution, and were never intended to last forever.”⁵

There once upon a time was a man who was partly Dave – he had a mission in life.

—John Lennon, “Partly Dave” from In His Own Write

In the early 1960s, a Christian coffee house in Washington, D.C., named The Potter’s House, sparked a wave of imitators across the nation. The National Council of Churches hired John D. Perry Jr. to survey the phenomenon, and he wrote about what he found. His coverage sparked even greater interest in the coffee house as mission. Perry’s article in *Christian Century* in February 1965 showed that more than 80 coffee houses had opened in the previous five years. Later that year the number had increased to 180. The movement was driven by the context of the 1960s: a time when many Christians felt a non-church setting better fit the countercultural tone of young people. Coffee houses provided an informal neutral ground in which to bridge the great cultural chasms that existed in American society in 1966. There was also a movement of coffee houses that sprung up outside military bases through which soldiers were “converted” to opposition to the Vietnam War.⁶

In the winter of 1966, Professor Leland Harder led a Mennonite Biblical Seminary (MBS) class using excerpts from Perry’s book, *The Coffee House Ministry*, as well as other texts written by coffee house proponents. His students wanted to give the model a try, and they began holding meetings in February 1966 to assess the coffee house’s viability.

Around the same time, Anne Merrifield, director of Christian education at First Presbyterian Church in Elkhart had been interested in the coffee house movement since one of her seminary classmates had started The Door, a coffee house in Chicago. She had begun collecting literature on coffee houses, menus from coffee

houses around the country and any other related texts she could get her hands on. Under Merrifield’s supervision, the First Presbyterian youth group became very interested in exploring the potential of a coffee house in Elkhart. Merrifield found out about the MBS group and was present from the third meeting onward.⁷ Soon many other churches and organizations were represented in the discussion.

The result of these meetings took its name, “Partly Dave,”⁸ from a short story by John Lennon. Although the name was chosen somewhat randomly, “Partly” came to represent the multifaceted goals for the enterprise. The introductory brochure described Partly Dave as “Partly a place ... where friends meet ... where questions are asked ... where opinions are heard ... where God’s love is witnessed ... where troubles are unloaded” and, finally, “where help is needed.”⁹

The founders articulated their hopes and dreams for the coffeehouse self-consciously and often, evaluating and reevaluating the extent to which they met their simple but lofty goals, always striving for a place where dialogue was open. Each year the donors met in an annual meeting and the minutes of those discussions as well as the detailed annual reports published from 1968 to 1975 provide rich qualitative evidence of the ministry’s successes and failures, its enthusiasms and anxieties as well as its budgetary records. The residential manager contributed a lengthy essay to each of these annual reports, keenly reflecting on Partly Dave as well as its context in downtown Elkhart.

The coffee house existence does not lend itself to ‘five-year plans’ or grandiose visions of expansion. It moves in small ways in people’s lives.

—Lonnie R. Buerge, Annual Report 1974-75

Elkhart Coffee House Inc., the legal name for the coffee house known as Partly Dave, officially began with paperwork filed on May 19, 1966. The bylaws allowed for two types of membership: Participating Members were individuals who donated \$25 per year; Organizational Members were any “organized churches or religious societies” who gave \$300 each year. Both kinds of members were to be represented on a board of nine directors.

In an “Amplified Statement of Purpose” to the Internal Revenue Service to secure income tax exemption in early 1967, the leaders



Peter Stuckey, 1971

1967

Amplified Statement of Purpose outlines mission.

Fall 1967

Boutique opens.

July 1969

Position Paper . . . Concerning the Use of Illegal Drugs is issued.

of the ministry clearly articulated their founding principles, which, by then, had several months of test drive. "The primary purpose of the Coffee House," the document began, "is to provide a relaxed, noncommercial setting for interpersonal dialogue about vital current and ultimate issues of life."¹⁰ Dialogue was the main goal of early Partly Dave, facilitated by trained volunteers who would act as catalysts and mediators as they listened but who also spoke from their own beliefs and experiences. Volunteers signed up for one weekend night per week and would serve that night for three months, able to renew or not at that juncture. They met for an hour before the evening's program to prepare themselves to fully engage with anyone and everyone who showed up. Cheap food and beverages were for sale, and there was usually some sort of presentation, often music. The performance, however, was always curtailed in order to allow for discussions at 10-person tables.

While Partly Dave was usually adequately supplied with volunteer staff, there was also a rapid rate of turnover, probably because of the intensity and extreme openness required for the kind of dialogue they were aiming for.

Poor institutional support also plagued Partly Dave. After the initial round of recruitment in 1966-67, only four churches signed on as organizational members in any one year until 1973. Despite being an ecumenical ministry, many of the churches who supported the mission of Partly Dave were younger Mennonite congregations. More churches signed on later, but they offered perhaps too little, too late. "One of the most disillusioning facts about this ministry,"

Howard Palmatier, president of the board wrote in 1968, "has been the inability of the majority of the churches to see this as Mission."¹¹ John Kampen, manager of Partly Dave from 1968-70, thought he knew why the churches were reluctant to fully participate. "Possibly," he wrote in 1970 after only one area church responded to a proposed collaboration, "the churches are not confident enough of themselves to enter into dialogue with those outside their walls or they are so busy with internal programs that they do not have time to dialogue with the outside world."¹²

Partly Dave, therefore, began to raise its own funds through a boutique inside the coffee house. The boutique began as a shelf in the first Partly Dave location and sold crafts made by patrons or brought from other countries by donors and friends of Partly Dave. Generating between \$40 and \$50 per month, the boutique was an important part of the financial viability of the entire Partly Dave operation.¹³

Beginning at 128 East Franklin Street in Elkhart, Partly Dave was forced to vacate rental properties twice. On both occasions, relocation brought an opportunity for new uses of space and different surroundings as well as a reevaluation of purpose and goals. In 1973, flush with a wave of donations, Partly Dave purchased a building at 201 South Main Street with the help of a \$16,000 loan from Church Extension Services Inc. of General Conference Mennonite Church.

Initially barring patrons under the age of 16, Partly Dave added an after-school poster shop¹⁴ in 1970 to cater to a middle-school crowd. 1971 saw the beginning of the Peace Frog Record Co-op, later known as "Ribbit." Offering patrons a way to earn money from their used records, the co-op usually broke even, despite losses from theft and malfunctioning records. "Positive aspects of the Co-op," manager Peter Stuckey wrote in 1972, "include the new persons that have come in to the poster shop, the demonstration of cooperation, the opportunities for exercising leadership, (and) the money it has plowed back into patrons' pockets as their used records sell." Stuckey typified the extreme self-consciousness of other Partly Dave managers, however, when he added a caveat: "One question to raise is whether a more careful look needs to be given to record buying and where that fits in with the American malaise of consumerism."¹⁵ Near the end of Partly Dave, the basement of 201 Main Street was converted into a food co-op.

August
1969

Partly Dave moves to 114 Main St.
with housing for resident manager.

1970

Poster shop opens.

Winter
1971

Peace Frog Record Co-op
opens.

1971

Goshen College class
conducts study.

Jan. 1972

Michigan lowers drinking
age to 18.

This year there has been a great number of new patrons. There is also a large variety: high schoolers, young factory workers, drug users, Jesus People, straights.

—Peter Stucky, Manager's Report, 1972

In 1971, students in Leland Harder's Methods of Social Research course at Goshen College conducted a study of Partly Dave, based on responses to a questionnaire. They sought to identify the demographics of Partly Dave's patrons, patterns of patron attendance and patrons' opinions regarding staff and programs at the coffee house. They further explored psychological facets of Partly Dave attendees as well as their responses to current issues.

Among the more fascinating findings of the study is a graph of patrons' willingness to talk to volunteer and residential staff about a variety of issues. Respondents said they were more likely to talk to resident staff about serious personal issues such as "trouble with the law," a "bad trip on drugs" or "trouble at home" but gravitated strongly toward volunteers when discussing world affairs, school or sharing creative ideas. The students concluded that both types of staff contributed "a distinctive role."¹⁶

The students also found that when asked what they liked best about the coffee house, only 4.1 percent said the planned programs were their favorite. A total of 47.5 percent suggested that they liked "the atmosphere" best and an additional 46 percent said "the people who come." When asked their main reason for attending Partly Dave, 31.6 percent of patrons answered "to rap with friends" and only 5.2 percent cited scheduled entertainment.¹⁷ On this evidence, the students concluded that Partly Dave was succeeding in its effort "to provide a relaxed, noncommercial setting for interpersonal dialogue about vital, current and ultimate issues of life."¹⁸ In a later portion of the study, 69 percent of respondents agreed with the statement "People should try to live in community—or strive for togetherness" while only 7 percent agreed that "Each man should live for himself—or strive for independence from others."¹⁹ Partly Dave, as a meeting place and an open forum, was then important as a kind of communal living.

As the years went on, Partly Dave's board of directors expanded

and shifted the purposes of Partly Dave to provide a more intentional form of community, adding a full-time live-in manager in 1970 to provide administrative streamlining and to embrace a more around-the-clock presence. Partly Dave became a place where people in need could go, and the managers' work with drug users, runaways and transients would grow to be a bigger facet of the ministry's mission. The resident staff grew from one to four in the next few years, modeling communal living. "As a recommendation, a group of resident staff should be increasingly seen as an important element in the witness and ministry of P. D. (Partly Dave)," argued Peter Stucky in the 1971-72 Annual Report. "If it is true that the call of Jesus calls persons to a new kind of life in which they live in love, (to an) openness to the Spirit of God and to each other, (to) forgiveness, (to) strengthening,—then it is important to give visible expression to this. ... And this cannot be done singly."²⁰

The coffee house was started by an evangelism class as a lab, and then the drug thing hit.

—Nancy Hulvershorn, Elkhart Truth, Aug. 27, 1971

In 1969, Partly Dave issued "A Position Paper ... Concerning the Use of Illegal Drugs."²¹ While the authors stressed, "It is not the task of the Elkhart Coffee House Association Inc. to take a position on the legality or illegality of certain drugs,"²² and said, "Persons who use drugs are frequently a part of the clientele of our Coffee House," they also clearly prohibited use of alcohol and drugs on the premises. In his manager's report the next year, John Kampen acknowledged that though drug abuse was only "one of many problems which patrons seek help with, it is one which will demand more attention in the coming year." He continued, "I feel that an emphasis on openness between persons, a high degree of confidentiality and the high priority placed on personal relationships, all of which are an integral part of the coffee house program, are of crucial importance in dealing with this problem."²³ Perhaps most importantly, Kampen was realistic: "We are not set up to be a drug abuse center. We could not handle serious drug problems."²⁴

The Goshen Survey of 1971 shed statistical light on drug use among Partly Dave patrons. According to the questionnaire, of the 46 patrons age 20 or younger, 87 percent used drugs to get high.

August 1972

Police arrest loiterers.

Jan. 1973

Building at 201 Main St. purchased.

Sept. 1974

Tom Rudy hired as street worker.

July 1975

Board votes to close Partly Dave.



Candle lighting service, 1973.

Only 21.8 percent of these respondents admitted using “Addictive” drugs, but it is still a startling statistic. Though drug use among older patrons was somewhat more modest, a remarkable cross-tabulation showed that of the 12 married patrons interviewed, only one did not use “Non-addictive” drugs to get high.²⁵ Yet in the same year, an Elkhart Truth article about Partly Dave suggested that the “drug problem, which confronted local youth for the past three years and took up much staff counseling time and energies, is receding.”²⁶

Partly Dave engaged with marginalized demographics, particularly drug users, and perhaps it had an impact on their community standing. John Kampen wrote in 1970 that “there are people in Elkhart who do not understand our program and are frightened by what they do know.”²⁷ Over two weekends in August 1972, Elkhart police arrested several persons, including a Partly Dave assistant manager, outside the coffee house on charges of loitering. The police procedures seemed irregular and were possibly motivated by stereotypes. After Partly Dave’s leadership filed a complaint questioning the motives and procedure of the arrests, any animosities seem to have been set to rest as Partly Dave challenged the police department to a softball game the next July.²⁸ Elkhart-area social services, who served the same demographics as Partly Dave, however, gained respect for the coffee house.²⁹ Over the years of Partly Dave’s existence, the volunteers and resident staff nurtured valuable connections with other agencies in Elkhart, notably a crisis hotline and Oaklawn, a

Mennonite-administered mental health facility in Goshen, Ind. When the board began to look at closing Partly Dave in 1975, the hotline sent a petition of support for its continuance.

By 1974 Tom Rudy, a recent graduate of Goshen College, was hired as a street worker, a member of the resident staff who would spend time in pool halls and bars and be available to refer people in need of counseling to professionals. Rudy continued a strong relationship between Partly Dave and Oaklawn that had begun when Carol Miller, an Oaklawn employee, had joined the resident staff of Partly Dave.³⁰

With an increasing percentage of volunteer and staff time going toward managing patrons’ crises, some of the countercultural nature of Partly Dave was set aside. Annual reports wondered whether rehabilitating individuals to function in mainstream society should be a focus of Partly Dave. “What happens to patrons when P.D. no longer serves their needs?” wondered Peter Stucky in 1972. “Is P.D.’s function to simply prepare persons to fit into American society more smoothly? The answer is no.” Instead, Stucky felt “a need for some kind of ongoing contact between the values, attitudes (and) commitments P.D. seeks to foster and its patrons. But P.D. has no congregation with which patrons can identify and continue their search and growth as persons.”³¹ While a few congregations were willing to donate money to Partly Dave’s cause, none was able or perhaps willing to integrate Partly Dave patrons into their churches.

We have become an institution and were never intended to last forever.

—Reflections on the Future of Partly Dave Coffee House:
Reasons for Closing

While financial concerns stemming from the 1973 move loomed over Partly Dave, the cultural context that surrounded its ministry changed precipitously. As manager Bob Charles put it in his 1973-74 report, there had been a “shift of attitudes away from a self-conscious and focused alienation toward society and its values and toward a listless, self-centered alienation” within the youth culture.³² It was this indifference in the youth of Elkhart, as well as Michigan’s 1972 reduction of the drinking age to 18 that managers of Partly Dave identified as the true dynamics of its downfall. There was dramatically less demand for Partly Dave, and that led to financial collapse. Whereas weekend night programs in 1970 had averaged

125 patrons, in 1974 they were attended by an average of just 40. Annual income from door fees was more than \$4,000 in 1972 and dropped by over half to \$1,822 in 1973 and to \$1,434 a year later.³³ The evaporation of “focused alienation” led to a dissipation of Partly Dave patrons. In the 1974-75 Annual Report, manager Bob Charles cited the Goshen College Survey four years earlier and reflected that the decrease in attendance was a downward spiral. “If persons come to be among people and rap with friends,” he wrote, “then the increasing absence of people and friends means a lack of motivation for coming.” Charles summed it up bleakly: “The cycle would seem to be a self-feeding one.”

In 1975, the board of Partly Dave began to seriously consider closing. Frank Sohar and Bob Charles compiled a list of pros and cons and included it with the minutes of the April board meeting. A spring mailing to friends of Partly Dave asked for donations. “The outstanding bills that we have are around \$2,000,” Frank Sohar wrote. “That sum needs to be paid off whether we continue or not.”³⁴ At the board meeting on July 8, 1975, the board voted to close Partly Dave by a vote of six to one.

Begun in 1966, Partly Dave became an important service for the city of Elkhart. Taking advantage of each annual report and several relocations to reassess and take stock, the people of Partly Dave stayed true to their founding ambitions while responding to the world around them and expanded into new and varied ways of encountering that world. Ultimately, however, that world had changed, and the particular brand of counterculture that had inspired Leland Harder’s seminary class and Anne Merrifield’s youth group was not as popular. Though Partly Dave survived far longer than most of its contemporary coffee houses,³⁵ (Many closed within months after opening.) it became a casualty of the very kinds of social upheaval



that had brought it into being. Partly Dave’s mission had come to an end.

Just as they had celebrated the 1973 move, the people of Partly Dave ended with a liturgy:

“The Partly Dave Coffee House opened its doors in September 1966 at 128 West Franklin,

And that was good.

There was not and never had been a place like Partly Dave in Elkhart. It was unique and exciting,

And that was good.

It was a people more than a building,

And that was good.

Partly Dave didn’t always know what it was doing but it had a direction it was heading,

And that was good.

And now Partly Dave is closing the doors of its last building; the city of Elkhart has been touched; the lives of hundreds of people have been touched,

And that is good.

Partly Dave will now live on in our lives.

We will continue to grow and experience; we will care and we will share; WE WILL LOVE!”³⁶

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When Mrs. Sudermann met Betty Crocker:

One Mennonite family's encounter with America's first lady of food



Betty Crocker interviewing a couple on the radio, 1950. Courtesy of the General Mills Archives.

In 1950 two great bakers met on a radio show in New York City—one, a Mennonite woman from Goshen, Ind., the other the First Lady of Food known as Betty Crocker. Their meeting brought together the simplicity and home-baked foods of both Mennonite tradition and an era in American history that emphasized the home as central to mainstream society.

The Washburn Crosby Company, a forerunner of General Mills Inc. and distributor of Gold Medal Flour, released an advertisement for Gold Medal Flour in October 1921 on the back of the *Saturday Evening Post*.¹ The ad consisted of mixed-up puzzle pieces, which participants were encouraged to put together. As rewards, contestants received pincushions resembling small flour sacks.²

Letters poured in from consumers with correctly completed puzzles—30,000 of them. Staff members were overwhelmed, not just with the number of pincushions to assemble, but also with the number of

baking-related questions that accompanied the letters. Consumers of Gold Medal Flour were a curious bunch, wanting information ranging from quality apple pie recipes to why their cakes were falling.³

From this advertisement and the ensuing responses, the cultural icon Betty Crocker was born. Over the years, Betty Crocker has encouraged women (and occasionally men) to make tasty baked goods, manage harmonious households and use Gold Medal flour.

Nine years before Betty Crocker emerged, Hilda Byler was born Jan. 12, 1912, to Tom and Nancy Schrock Byler in their home near Hesston, Kansas. Four years later the family moved to Missouri, where all of Nancy's family lived.⁴

As the oldest child, Hilda helped with homemaking, baking, gardening, sewing, farm animals and berry picking. She learned skills and Mennonite values that would serve her during her life's journey.

Both Hilda Byler and Betty Crocker went through their formative years in the

1920s. Hilda learned Mennonite ideals from her family's faith, interests and activities. Betty Crocker's principles developed from the American social needs of the day. Despite their very different origins, their worldviews had astonishing similarities. Years later, in 1950, Hilda would cross paths with the fictional Betty, in a radio meeting of the two great bakers and homemakers when Hilda became Betty Crocker's "Homemaker of the Week."

Hilda Byler and Jacob Sudermann met at Goshen College. Hilda sat in front of Jacob and his friends in chorale. Her long, beautiful curls drew the young men's attention. Although Jacob had never talked to Hilda, after accepting a dare from his friends, he asked Hilda out on a date. To his surprise, she accepted.⁵

On Aug. 17, 1933, Jacob and Hilda Sudermann married at the Byler Ranch near Kalvesta, Kan.⁶ Married during the Depression when frugality was a way of life, they had to borrow \$100 for the ceremony.⁷

Jacob and Hilda moved to Goshen, Ind., where Jacob worked at Western Rubber Company making \$11.55 a week and Hilda took music classes at Goshen College. The newlyweds rented a two-bedroom apartment from Jacob's mother and stepfather,⁸ paying \$10 a week. With \$2.50 set aside for groceries, little money was left for other expenses.⁹

Over the next few years their situation improved. They lived in various locations on and off Goshen College campus until 1936 when Jacob was asked by Goshen College president Sanford C. Yoder to teach German.¹⁰

Following the end of World War II, Jacob and Hilda started work on a five-acre homestead on College Avenue. They named their property Five Acres. They built a house out of concrete blocks, one of the cheapest and most available construction materials. By the end of the summer of 1946, their new home was ready for them and their three children.¹¹ John Jacob "J.J." had been born in 1934, David in 1942 and Anna Marie in 1945.¹²

The Sudermanns displayed their Mennonite values of self-sufficiency, simplicity and frugality. In a great display of how agriculturally productive they were, four out of the five acres on the Sudermann land were used for produce.¹³

In 1950, the Sudermanns produced 6,000 quarts of strawberries. Five Acres provided food for the Sudermanns, flowers for pleasure and excess produce for Jacob's parents' small store. Hilda baked bread daily, and the pantry was always filled with canned goods.¹⁴

Although Hilda was Mennonite, she was still in tune with modern culture surrounding cooking. Betty Crocker was one of the major players in this culture, and Hilda owned at least two Betty Crocker cookbooks.¹⁵ Five Acres provided the Sudermanns with a distinctly Mennonite home that reflected the values of simplicity and thriftiness that Betty Crocker encouraged.

Hilda and her husband held similar values to those supported by General Mills in the postwar era. Betty Crocker was the epitome of the American woman and of the culture surrounding homemakers. The Sudermanns held closely many virtues that Betty Crocker espoused, albeit from a specifically Mennonite approach.

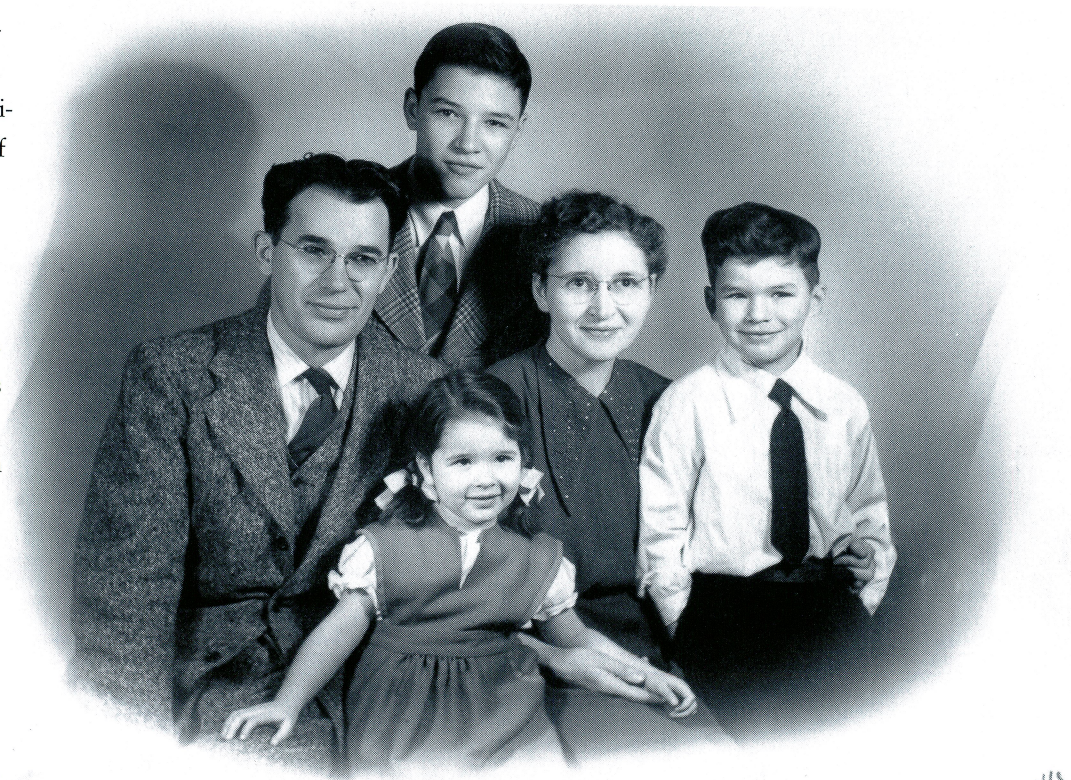
Their story provides evidence that some Mennonites not only paid attention to mainstream American culture, but that Mennonite and mainstream American values were not always mutually exclusive.

Like Hilda, Betty Crocker was a woman of her time. The culture she promoted evolved with the changing American culture. Betty Crocker survived the decades by providing consumers with what they wanted: baking information and products that were classic, contemporary and economical. General Mills worked hard to keep Betty Crocker in touch with changing American lifestyles and how they affected cooking and eating choices.¹⁶

In 1924, Betty Crocker made her debut on the radio in the "Betty Crocker Cooking School of the Air." Thirteen regional stations, each with its own Betty Crocker voice, provided listeners with cooking tips. "Students" sent in reports for Betty Crocker to "grade." During the first year the school "graduated" 238 people, ranging in age from 16 to 82.¹⁷

During the early 1930s, Betty Crocker was a hit, answering the pleas for culinary help in a time of scarcity. Depression-era homemakers who wrote to Betty named grocery bill management as their single biggest hurdle.¹⁸ She responded over the radio and in print with advice and meal planning, giving families an adequate diet for those on low wages. Nutritionists and social workers gave Betty Crocker national recognition for her booklet "Meal Planning on Minimum and Low-Cost Budgets."¹⁹

In 1931, to help in tough times, Betty Crocker released coupons, inserted into flour bags, which could be used to reduce the price of silverware.²⁰ Hilda Sudermann saved these coupons and bought silverware,



The Sudermann family, circa 1950 (left to right Jacob Sudermann, John Jacob and Anna Marie, Hilda Suderman, and David). Courtesy of David Sudermann.

planning to give them to her son, J.J., as a wedding gift. J.J. never married, and the silverware was eventually used at home.²¹

Making use of leftovers and being thrifty was one of Betty's more common tips during the Great Depression. As Betty stated in a June 1, 1932, radio broadcast, being efficient through leftovers was not only financially smart, it was a pillar of good housekeeping and part of a wife's duty:

*Thrift has always been the banner of house-wifely skill and in these days of financial strain everyone is trying to avoid waste of every kind. Scraps of vegetable and bits of meat, which in a time of plenty might have been discarded, must return to the table again, to go just a little bit further. So even the least experienced cook won't want to be feeding the garbage can at the expense of their husband.*²²

Betty Crocker's charm, accessibility and practical advice were a counterweight to the trials and tribulations of the Great Depression. With a cheery disposition, she helped millions of Americans feel better about themselves, their families and their cooking skills. Betty helped solidify brand loyalty based on trust and personal relationship with a celebrity.²³

According to multiple surveys conducted in the early 1940s, nine out of every 10 homemakers knew the name Betty Crocker. This was a buildup to the April 1945 issue of *Fortune* magazine, which named Betty Crocker the second best-known woman in America, behind First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. This honor earned Betty Crocker the nickname, "First Lady of Food."²⁴

Betty Crocker's fame and influence increased and were put to good use as America met new challenges. During World War II, the United States Government put limits on how much sugar, flour and other goods families were allotted over a period of time. During this time, Betty Crocker commended frugality and gave out tips for



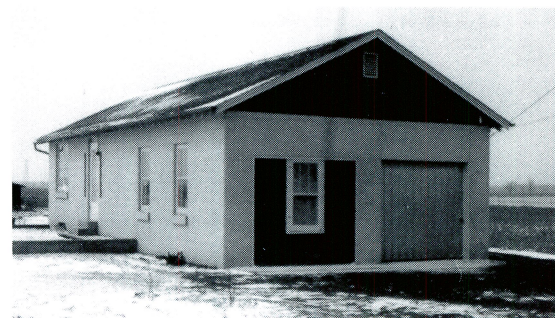
Hilda Sudermann in the Five Acres homestead, undated. Courtesy of David Sudermann.

saving baking materials while still generating excellent products.²⁵

In 1945, at the request of the U.S. Office of War Information, Betty Crocker broadcasted a radio program called "Our Nation's Rations" to aid homemakers in making the most of government rations.²⁶ The program aired for four months. At this time, 7 million copies of the Betty Crocker booklet "Your Share" were given out.

Following the war, as people were recovering financially, General Mills still held high the notions of efficiency, quality and family. Women were encouraged to stay at home, tend to their families and even give up their jobs for unemployed veterans returning home.²⁷ Over the radio, Betty Crocker claimed homemaking as the highest calling for women.²⁸

In 1948, to maintain customer interest and brand loyalty, General Mills started



The Sudermann house on the Five Acres homestead, circa 1947. Courtesy of David Sudermann.

naming individuals as the Betty Crocker Homemaker of the Week. A friend or relative would submit a letter of recommendation, and winners won trips to New York City and appeared on the radio show, "Betty Crocker Magazine of the Air."

The show provided topics of advice ranging from cooking and "female concerns" to housekeeping and time management to husbands and beaux, friends and relatives

and, of course, Gold Medal Flour.”²⁹ Betty Crocker not only gave cooking advice and displayed her cultural importance through the radio, but also reinforced parameters that defined the ideal homemaker.

Like a lot of white middle-class American women, Hilda Sudermann was a homemaker. Although the Sudermann family rarely listened to Betty Crocker radio programs, Hilda faithfully used her Betty Crocker cookbooks.

Sometime in early 1950, General Mills received an essay nominating Hilda Sudermann for Homemaker of the Week. Hilda claimed to have encouraged Jacob to submit the letter as she was not eligible to nominate herself.³⁰ But according to their son David, Jacob routinely enjoyed writing jingles due to his skill with and playful approach to language, and he had entered several radio contests following World War II.

David recalls a specific contest for Hershey’s Almond Joy candy bars that won the family “a large box of the delicious dark chocolate, creamy coconut bars.”³¹ David guesses that the whole Betty Crocker contest was Jacob’s idea, for he surely relished the challenge of essay writing.

By nominating his wife as Homemaker of the Week, Jacob highlighted a postwar trend among American Mennonite women: the melding of Anabaptist traditions with modern female gender roles as women’s lives, both Mennonite and non-Mennonite, changed following World War II.³²

As being Mennonite changed during the mid-20th century, so did being a woman.³³ These changes played off each other.

Leading up to the 1950s, self-sufficiency through agriculture was a virtue advocated in Mennonite circles for it prevented social and commercial integration with the broader world. The concept of Mennonite peoplehood started to morph during the 1950s. Mennonites realized that they needed to utilize institutional models from the outside for social stability while maintaining their “identity as a religiously devout and



Betty Crocker portrait, 1936. Courtesy of the General Mills Archives.

conservative people.”³⁴

How Mennonite women integrated institutions from the outside world differed between decades. During the 1940s, women sought economic productivity in the privacy of their homes. Private lives turned public in the 1950s as women displayed their domestic lives in public. Later, the women of the 1970s combined elements of both in their efforts to remain socially stable and distinctly Mennonite.³⁵

The Sudermanns exemplified this change. With the years of preparation that went behind the making of Five Acres, Hilda and Jacob showed how productive they could be within their domestic unit. By becoming the Homemaker of the Week, Hilda set the perfect example of the domestic life being displayed in a public setting.

Here is the letter, read over the air, which Jacob Sudermann submitted for Hilda’s nomination:³⁶

*Dear Betty Crocker,
While homemakers are being
praised, let me sing the praises of my
own dear wife who for 17 years has
shared with me, so ably and sweetly, the
rugged going on our road of life. The
marriage vows included the usual “for
better or for worse,” and our experience*

has usually been on the worse side financially, and on the better side in every other respect. I am a teacher, having said that much, details can be eliminated. We’ve always had to devise projects for extra income, and these were possible only because the prime mover was a thrifty, capable, loving wife!

We were married during the Depression and do you remember the day the banks closed? That was the setting for the beginning of our marriage. We borrowed one hundred dollars, bought our license and had a garden wedding on the big prairie somewhere between Garden City and Cimarron, Kansas. It was the only garden within 30 miles and Pennsylvania Dutch hands had made the reluctant desert bloom where even cottonwoods had a hard time of it. I took the bride back to Indiana and our first home was a two-room apartment with just enough space to turn around, for which we paid \$10 a month rent.

In 1936 I was asked to teach German in the local college. I had to prepare for it as I had previously taken a Master’s Degree in American History. I made the change although it meant three years of graduate work in German and I went off to the University of Michigan alone. Hilda stayed at home with our three-month-old baby, paid all her own expenses and left me free to concentrate on mine. There were more piano lessons and if you have ever listened to the disharmony of 20 children hoping to become concert pianists, you know what that means. Hilda took the beating patiently, even with a baby tugging at her dress for attention.

Hilda’s work is done with no lost motion and the amount she accomplishes is still a constant surprise to me. One day I watched her bake 30 pies in a matter of three hours and four different kinds at that. And they’re so delicious; they disappear like magic. You’ve hon-

ored so many deserving homemakers
Betty Crocker, and I think my wife be-
long right along with them, don't you?

Cordially yours,
Jacob Sudermann

The nomination included not only the letter but also one or two favorite recipes of the nominee. The Sudermanns submitted Hilda's recipes for bread and rhubarb meringue pie. The letter and recipes worked, and Hilda became the 129th Betty Crocker Homemaker of the Week.³⁷

Jacob and Hilda set off on July 2 from Elkhart, Ind., and arrived in New York City by train the next day. They stayed at the Hotel Statler, ate at a variety of restaurants and saw shows at the Barrymore Theatre and the Radio City Music Hall.³⁸

The Sudermanns' time on the air lasted less than 20 minutes and focused on the essay that Jacob wrote. Both Jacob and Hilda expand on elements of the essay, prompted by Betty Crocker and the radio show emcee.

Towards the end of the program, Betty Crocker and Hilda reviewed Hilda's rhubarb meringue pie recipe. They went over the ingredients and method before presenting the studio audience with samples. As the emcee described it, "It's a dream of a pie!"³⁹

In addition to the trip to New York City with all expenses paid and an appearance on "Betty Crocker Magazine of the Air," Hilda received a gift box of General Mills products

To listen to the radio interview, go to
<http://mcusaarchives.omeka.net/items/show/1>

Rhubarb Meringue Pie (transcript from show)

Ingredients

Pie crust (8-inch)	1 tablespoon butter
3 cups diced rhubarb	1 cup sugar
2 eggs	3 tablespoons flour

Method (from radio recording)

"I use your [Gold Medal] standard pastry recipe for the pie crust. ... Dice enough fresh young rhubarb to fill three cups, pour boiling water over the diced rhubarb and let that stand for about five minutes before draining out the water. Combine two slightly beaten egg yolks with one tablespoon of butter, one cup of sugar and three tablespoons of Gold Medal flour. Mix until well blended. ... This mixture is stirred into the strained rhubarb, and now the filling is ready to be poured into the pie shell and baked at 350 degrees for one-half hour. ... At the end of the 30 minutes, you take the pie out and pile it high with meringue made from the two egg whites left from the filling. Then back it goes into the oven to bake at the same temperature for about 15 to 20 minutes or until the meringue is a nice golden brown."

and a Crosley kitchen freezer.⁴⁰

Throughout their time at Five Acres, Jacob and Hilda Sudermann lived out many of the values encouraged by Betty Crocker, such as simplicity, family orientation, creativity and frugality.

While Betty Crocker's view was secular and worldly, the Sudermanns approached their way of life from a distinctly Mennonite perspective. The Sudermanns' story

interweaves their faith tradition and secular society. It's a story of Mennonites performing deeds that seem specific to their Anabaptist heritage but, in fact, were quite common in postwar America.

Matthew Amstutz is a Goshen College senior. He is pursuing a double major in history and journalism.

Endnotes

- 1 Susan Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 9.
- 2 The Story of Betty Crocker (General Mills, n.d.), 2.
- 3 Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker*, 9.
- 4 Hilda Byler Sudermann Martin, *Roots and Wings: A Life Story*. Private collection, 11.
- 5 Betty Crocker Interview, 1950. Box 2, Folder 1. Jacob Sudermann Papers, 1900-1980. HM1-606. Mennonite Church USA Archives - Goshen. Goshen, Indiana.
- 6 David Sudermann, e-mail message to author, June 20, 2012.
- 7 Betty Crocker Interview, 1950.
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- 9 Betty Crocker Interview, 1950.
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- 13 Betty Crocker Interview, 1950.
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- 15 David Sudermann, e-mail message to author, June 22, 2012.
- 16 The Story of Betty Crocker, 2.
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- 22 Susan Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 53-54.
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- 24 Ibid., 114-116.
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- 27 Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker*, 119.
- 28 Ibid., 123.

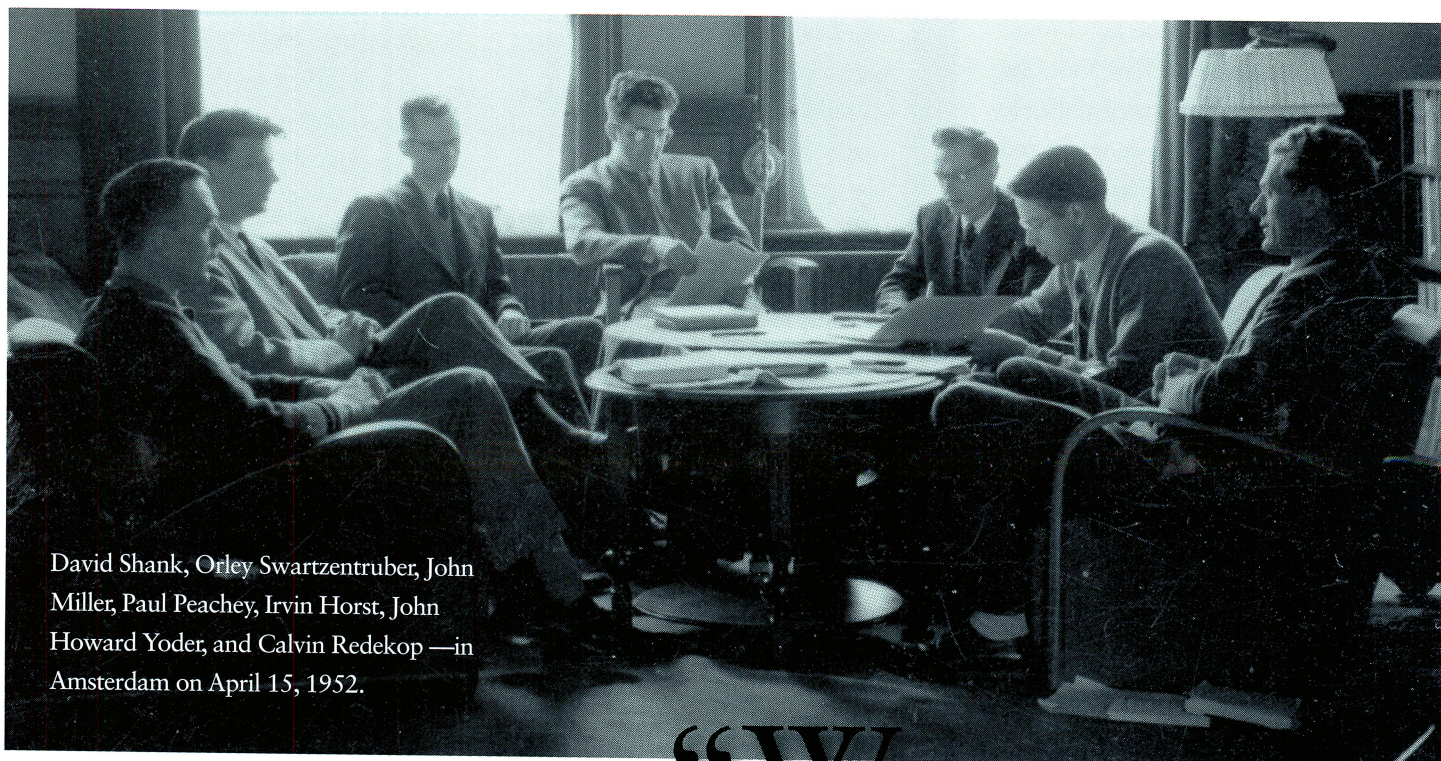
- 29 Ibid., 31.
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- 31 David Sudermann, e-mail message to author, June 20, 2012.
- 32 Royden K. Loewen, "Household, Coffee Klatsch, and Office: The Evolving Worlds of Mid-Twentieth-Century Mennonite Women," *Strangers at Home*, ed. Kimberly D. Schmidt, Diane Zimmerman Umble, Steven D. Reschly, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 276.
- 33 Ibid., 277.
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- 35 Ibid., 278.
- 36 Betty Crocker Interview, 1950.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Betty Crocker Radio Interview Transcript, 1950.
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- 40 Letter from General Mills. Box 1, Folder 34. Jacob Sudermann Papers.

The Concern Movement

By Nathan Hershberger

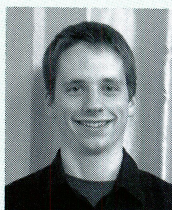
Concern wanted congregationalism;
what resulted was the committee.

—Nathan Hershberger



David Shank, Orley Swartzentruber, John Miller, Paul Peachey, Irvin Horst, John Howard Yoder, and Calvin Redekop—in Amsterdam on April 15, 1952.

Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen, John Howard Yoder Papers, HM1-48



Nathan Hershberger offers a 21st century glimpse into the history of the Concern movement that began in Europe in the 1950s. His essay, originally titled “Power, Authority, and Renewal: the Concern Movement, Paul Peachey, and the Fragmented Institutionalization of Men-

nonite Life,” analyzes decision making in the Mennonite Church and surveys the influence of Anabaptist thinking that moved excited young leaders to challenge established thought and practice.

A recent graduate from Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., Hershberger received top honors in the undergraduate essay category of the 2012 John Horsch Mennonite History Research Contest. This fall he began pursuing a master’s degree in scripture, interpretation and practice in the religious studies department at the University of Virginia.

“We thought this thing up and wrote Orie Miller a letter ... and within three months the first group was sailing for Europe.”¹ With lingering amazement sociologist Calvin Redekop recounted (in an interview earlier this year) the swift founding of Pax, an alternative service program begun in 1951. Needing only the backing of Orie O. Miller, executive secretary of Mennonite Central Committee, the project was underway.

Contrast that era of authoritative Mennonite personalities and decisive action with the recent restructuring of Mennonite Central Committee. In a process from 2008 to 2012, entitled “New Wine/ New Wineskins: Restructuring MCC for the 21st Century,” and through a lengthy series of meetings with international constituency and contributing churches that “included listening to and consultation with more than 2,000 people from 50 countries,” MCC transitioned from a binational (Canada and the United States) relief and

development organization into two national organizations.²

If these two stories are at all representative of their respective periods in Mennonite history, something significant must have changed in the culture of Mennonite institutions during the intervening period. Perhaps more than anything else, that something was the Concern movement.

Concern was a pamphlet series that ran from 1954 to 1971; it was first published by a group of U.S. Mennonites in postwar Europe.³ Over the course of several conferences, beginning in 1952, and the eventual publication of the *Concern* series, these men, reflecting on their European experiences and American background, articulated a radical critique of the authority structures of the Mennonite Church.

In their public writings, their correspondences and especially the *Concern* series, Concern members expressed two frustrations. First, they criticized the centralization of authority in church organizations by which a few powerful leaders exercised power inflexibly and unilaterally. Second, Concern criticized the institutional and cultural forms these leaders were building up, a critique that included arguments against not only the ethnic boundary markers of Mennonite society, but also the professionalization of the ministry, development of denominational structures and perceived assimilation on issues of economics and nonresistance.

This critique of institutional and cultural forms grew out of an unflinching emphasis on the local congregation that modeled itself after the New Testament and Anabaptist examples in a way that was unmediated by continuing cultural forms and institutions.

While Concern's critique of centralized authority did take hold in Mennonite society—and the powerful leaders who had guided Mennonites through World War II and the postwar period consequently passed away without replacement—Concern's broader critique of institutional patterns did not result in either significant transfer of power to nor emphasis on the local congregation, although that critique has shaped Mennonite discourse since then. In fact, while the Mennonite Church has ... shifted away from highly centralized leadership partly in response to Concern's critiques, that

All Mennonite theology, history, and sociology of significance in the past quarter century has, however un-self-consciously, in some way interacted with Concern.

—Rodney Sawatsky, "A Concern Retrospective,"
Conrad Grebel Review, 1990

Bender was especially known for carefully "shoulder tapping" promising protégées for graduate study or particular MCC assignments and safeguarding their employment at church institutions. As an extreme example of such shoulder-tapping, John Miller recalled in 1990 that "two weeks before starting medical school I was invited to prepare myself instead for teaching at Goshen College Biblical Seminary. It was Harold Bender who suggested I go to Basel, Switzerland, for doctoral studies in Old Testament...in the fall of 1951."

— "Concern Reflections," Conrad Grebel Review, 1990

very response has actually strengthened the pace of institutionalization in the Mennonite Church: Power devolved from centralized leadership *not* primarily to congregations, but to institutional structures developed by the previous generation of leaders. Concern wanted congregationalism; what resulted was the committee.

Origins

Paul Peachey played a significant role not only in organizing the Concern group and its eventual publications, but also in shaping and articulating its radical critique of the Mennonite Church. Serving in Europe under MCC, Peachey and his wife, Ellen Elizabeth Shenk, managed the flow of materials channeled from Mennonites in the United States for the relief and reconstruction of the areas of Europe devastated by World War II.⁴ After terminating MCC work to study full-time, he completed a doctorate in 1953 at the University of Zurich with a thesis on the sociological composition of early Anabaptists in and around Zurich, Switzerland.⁵

With the ruins of Christendom visible in every war-ravaged direction, newly discovered sources on 16th century Anabaptism to explore and important theologians to study with, Peachey found postwar Europe invigorating. He set out to have a conversation with

other interested Mennonites in Europe about the state of the Mennonite church and the direction of Mennonite theology.

In 1951 Peachey sent a letter to six other Mennonites doing graduate, mission or relief work in Europe; he advocated for a study conference in Amsterdam on Dutch Mennonite history combined with a roundtable among the participants to “face together some problems arising in advanced theological study and related fields.”⁶

Seven Mennonite men—David Shank, Orley Swartzentruber, John Miller, Paul Peachey, Irvin Horst, John Howard Yoder, and Calvin Redekop—showed up in Amsterdam on April 15, 1952, to do just that. After a week of lectures on Dutch Mennonite history, the seven each presented papers on a variety of theological and historical issues.

This meeting initiated a conversation that questioned the basic assumptions of the previous generation of Mennonite church leaders.

Powerful leaders

Nearly all seven who met in Amsterdam had been formatively shaped by powerful, visionary leaders in the Mennonite Church⁷ and its emerging institutions during the interwar and postwar periods. Foremost among these leaders was Harold S. Bender (1897-1962), dean of Goshen College and Goshen Biblical Seminary and president of the Mennonite World Conference. Bender’s influential address,

**A denomination...is
neither a church nor the Church.**

—John Howard Yoder, “What is Concern?,” *Concern* 4, 1957

“The Anabaptist Vision,” given to the American Society of Church History, did much to forge a new consensus about Anabaptism.⁸

Orie O. Miller (1892-1977) was another key figure in Mennonite church politics; he helped found Mennonite Central Committee in 1920 and gave decisive leadership to MCC from 1935 to 1958. Guy F. Hershberger, another key figure who taught alongside Bender at Goshen, wrote an influential book on nonresistance that outlined the distinctly Mennonite and biblical basis for nonresistance. Hershberger was also key in efforts to preserve the rural farming community lifestyle of many Mennonites through the establishment of the Mennonite Community Association, several related farming life periodicals, and a mutual aid insurance program.

Bender, Hershberger, Miller and others were also involved in developing and strengthening existing schools and colleges, founding seminaries to train ministers, maintaining the nonresistant peace stance through careful involvement with alternative service programs, especially the Civilian Public Service, and carefully steering various denominational committees and publications.



Paul Peachey, undated.

Courtesy of the Eastern Mennonite University Archives

The local church: center of faith

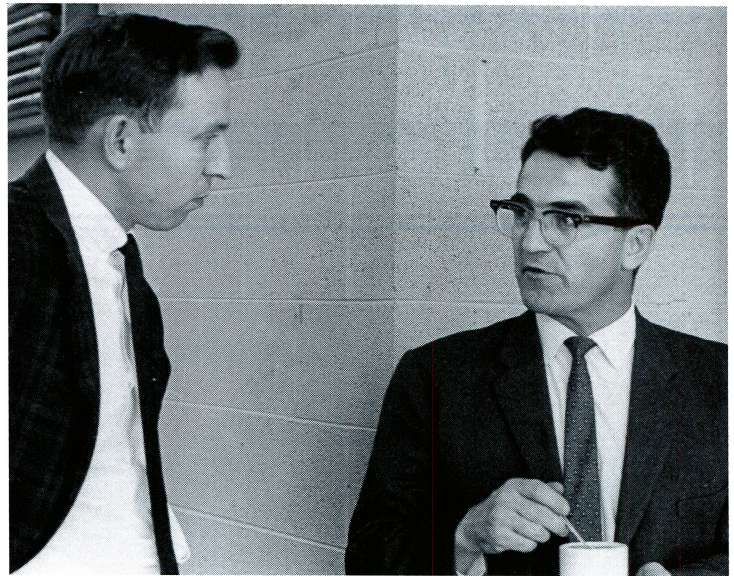
Concern faced up to a generation that had given them, in the words of Harold S. Bender, “a carefully built, well-knit, efficient organization of activities.”⁹ Bender and his generation were confident that the faith had been kept. However, Concern challenged the very notion of the value of such a gift, criticizing not only the institutional forms that constituted the gift, but also the leadership style that thought it possible to simply impart such an organization. Particularly as expressed in the writings of Peachey and Yoder, Concern feared that institutionalization, especially in the form of the professionalization of the ministry, would distort and distract from that all-important center of faith, the local congregation. For Concern,

the local congregation, socially constituted on the basis of the New Testament example and guided by the original Anabaptists, was the true meaning of the word church.

Having taken Concern's criticism about centralized leadership to heart, the Mennonite church is now guided by a broader spectrum of leaders more constrained by group processes than Harold Bender or Orie Miller ever were. Yet the very response to such criticism, indeed the very transmission of the Concern vision, has in fact shown that Concern's broader critique—its argument against institutions in favor of congregations—has not fundamentally taken hold, or insofar as it has, it is transmitted through the very institutional structures that Concern critiqued.

The genius of the Anabaptist vision lies not merely in the heroic act of men who dared to abandon the apostate Volkskirche culture inherited and developed by medieval Christendom, but above all in the reassertion of the fact that the church is always the church in the living existential community. ... It is this vision that calls us to throw off the swaddling clothes of a cultural continuum and once more to follow Christ only as He dwells in the midst of His People.

— Paul Peachey, "The Modern Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision," 1957



Courtesy of the Eastern Mennonite University Archives

In his memoir, *A Usable Past?*, Paul Peachey asked, quite openly, "To what extent can Christian *ekklesias* become embodied as materially-based cultural institutions without jeopardizing their pneumatic integrity?"¹⁰ Standing in the midst of the ruins of Christendom in the 1950s, Concern's answer was, "very little." The answer of today's Mennonite church in word and much more in substance has been "significantly more." This question of balancing cultural and institutional continuity with the pneumatic, spontaneous integrity of the local congregation is fundamental to the experience of the church; every generation must answer it afresh.

While conducting research for his essay, Hershberger interviewed Paul Peachey. Peachey passed away August 18, 2012, after a brief illness. "I was privileged to be able to speak with [Peachey] once more in the week before he died," Hershberger wrote in an email to the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* editor. "I am very glad that our interviews were recorded."

Endnotes

- 1 Calvin Redekop, interview by author, February 29, 2012, recording, Menno Simons Historical Library, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA. Orie O. Miller obtained the approval of the MCC Executive Committee December 2, 1950, presented the program to the MCC annual meeting March 15, 1951, and the first shipment of Pax workers arrived in Europe April 6, 1951. Cal Redekop, *The Pax Story* (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2001), 11, 44, 45.
- 2 Cheryl Zehr Walker, "Church Summit Points Way Ahead for MCC," MCC Press Release, February 4, 2011, <http://www.mcc.org/stories/news/church-summit-points-way-ahead-mcc>.
- 3 While *Concern*, when italicized, refers primarily to the pamphlet series which began in 1954, the phrases

- "Concern movement" or "Concern group" can also be used more broadly (and somewhat anachronistically) to denote the members of the 1952 Amsterdam conference and later participants in the pamphlets series and conferences. In this broader sense, "Concern" will not be italicized. For general resources on Concern, see J. Lawrence Burkholder, "Concern Pamphlets Movement," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, 1989. Additionally, the entire Conrad Grebel Review 8 (1990) is devoted to Concern with a historical overview by Paul Toews and retrospectives from six of seven original Concern members.
- 4 Peachey, *A Usable Past? A Story of Living and Thinking Vocationally on the Margins* (Telford, PA: Dreamseeker Books, 2008), 47-49.
 - 5 Ibid., 54, 59.
 - 6 Paul Peachey, letter October 13, 1951. Box 26. Paul

Peachey Papers, Eastern Mennonite University Archives, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

- 7 In this paper references to the Mennonite Church apply primarily though not exclusively to the "Old" Mennonite Church, one of several Mennonite denominations and often contrasted with the General Conference Mennonite Church with which it merged at the end of the twentieth century. Almost all Concern members were from the "Old" Mennonite Church. To this denomination their criticisms were addressed.
- 8 Al Keim, *Harold S. Bender, 1897-1962* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 316-318; Harold Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," *Church History* 13/1 (1944): 3-24. Original address given the previous year.
- 9 Harold Bender, "To the Youth of the Mennonite Church," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 1/1 (1927): 1.
- 10 Peachey, *A Usable Past?*, 211.

Harold S. Bender (1897-1962) and the Anabaptist Vision

In memory of his passing, 50 years ago

By Leonard Gross



Elizabeth and Harold S. Bender, circa 1960

Impelling visions

Through the centuries certain statements created in times of confusion and conflict have caught the imagination of the Mennonite people and became for a time an impelling vision of hope which helped pull the Anabaptist movement onto more solid ground. Such statements came at crucial times in our Anabaptist-Mennonite history: at Zurich in 1524-25 at the time of the birth of Anabaptism; at Schleithem in 1527 when the movement seemed to be going off into all directions; but also in 1575, 1702, 1841, 1896 and, last but not least, in 1944 with the creation of Harold S. Bender's "Anabaptist Vision."¹

Each of these statements dealt with the Anabaptist vision – of disciples of Christ, gathered in his Spirit, who sought to live out his gospel of peace. In 1702, for example, part of the vision ran:

The characteristics of the true church are: the true fruits of conversion; the avoidance of sins; living in goodness, righteousness and truth according to the teaching of Christ and his apostles; having the right faith in Jesus Christ through obedience to the divine word; practicing his holy ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper; confessing God and Jesus Christ candidly before the

people; holding to a fiery brotherly love among one another; and maintaining the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace and through taking up the cross and the true discipleship of Christ.²

A triad of ideas – discipleship, the community dynamic of mutuality and love, and the overriding spirit of peace – are central motifs in this 1702 Anabaptist vision. In a manner that is more than coincidental, in the year 1944 these very same themes surfaced again.

Harold S. Bender's Anabaptist Vision was also a vision of faithful disciples of Jesus, gathered in the name and spirit of the Christ of peace. It cut through myriad doctrinal overlays that had accrued over the decades – especially after the transformation of the Mennonite church from a German culture to an American culture a half-century earlier.

It was, at its base, conservative in its attempt to conserve the best of our faith tradition; it was liberal in being open to testing any and all new scholarship that impinged upon the quest toward an honest portrayal of our Anabaptist-Mennonite past. And it was this vision that permeated Bender's life and thought throughout his lifetime. In fact, it had to be honestly conservative as well as liberal, in order to jump back through the dominating progressive era of the teens and twenties when the Mennonite Church (MC)³ had leaned so heavily upon the new religious trends of the day. This included a form of Fundamentalism which, with its emphasis upon individualism and nationalism, endangered at the core the church's traditional witness of peace, community and discipleship. Although seemingly so very biblical, such doctrines, when seen in the light of their social context, stood in opposition to certain traits that had been part and parcel of the tides of Anabaptist history all the way back to Anabaptist beginnings in 1525. Yet this danger remained largely unrecognized by many Mennonites during the first four decades of the 20th century.

But before dealing in more depth with this issue and how 50 years after his death we ought to view these things, we need first to introduce the man who gave us the Anabaptist Vision: Harold S. Bender.

Who was Harold S. Bender?

In 2012 there is a generation or two of Mennonites who no longer know of Harold S. Bender. Who was this man? Why do we today choose to commemorate him and his views? The following is a brief summary of his story:

Harold S. Bender was born in Elkhart, Ind., in 1897, at a time when Elkhart was at the hub of the Mennonite Church (MC), thanks to John F. Funk's Herald of Truth / Herold der Wahrheit and other programs in publishing, relief work, mission work, mutual aid and education that developed there in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1923 Harold married Elizabeth Horsch, and the family was blessed with two children, Mary Eleanor and Nancy. Elizabeth would prove to be a powerful ally to Harold, given her uncanny ability of honing the English language and her keen adeptness in the use of foreign languages. From 1924 to 1962, Bender was professor at Goshen College in church history, Bible and sociology. He was dean of Goshen College from 1931 to 1944 and dean of Goshen College Biblical Seminary from 1944 until 1962, the year of his death.

Bender's birth coincided with the Mennonite renaissance or awakening of the 1880s and 1890s, which was, in part, the result of a shift in language from German to English. Mennonites during this era began accepting much within their new English-speaking, North American culture, including higher education and a renewed interest in missions at home and abroad. Bender's own interest in education should be seen in this light.⁴

Bender's formative years, on the other hand, came during the time of a new generation of Mennonite Church leaders who attempted to establish a new Mennonite orthodoxy in doctrine and dress, with a certain codification of both, and imbued to some degree with Fundamentalism. Daniel Kauffman was the major leader at the time (ca. 1898-1930). His books, Manual of Bible Doctrine (1898), Bible Doctrine (1914) and Doctrines of the Bible (1928), became the definitive word for many within the church during those decades.⁵



Harold S. Bender, circa 1940

The importance of Bender's work

The significance of Bender may be seen in how he dealt with these new trends, both Fundamentalist and Liberal, within the church. Bender chose a route and approach to vision that differed from both. His vision stood in contrast to the Kauffman view of

doctrine and dress, not so much in criticizing it directly but rather by circumventing it. Bender chose to express the Christian faith through the historical process and attempted to rediscover the Anabaptist vision of biblical faith and life. Bender did not believe that he was creating a new theology but was returning to and recovering an old faith: that of his own spiritual ancestors.

In 1927 he created a journal, the Mennonite Quarterly Review (MQR), and in 1929 he founded a scholarly series, Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, writing the first volume himself (Two Centuries of American Mennonite Literature). He was lead

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editor of the four-volume Mennonite Encyclopedia. A dissertation on Conrad Grebel, one of the founders of Anabaptism (1935, published 1950); a biography of Menno Simons (1936); Mennonite Origins in Europe (1942); The Anabaptist Vision (1944); Biblical Revelation and Inspiration (1959); and These Are My People (1962) – these indicate the scope of Bender's efforts to bring about a return to the Anabaptist faith as he understood it. Throughout these decades he edited the MQR and published many shorter essays therein; plus he wrote for other scholarly journals and church papers.

Bender's leadership in the life of the Mennonite Church, in worldwide Mennonitism and in ecumenical contacts was evident through the long list of committees and organizations in which he was active. Central in Bender's vision, on all levels of interaction, was his concern for the way of peace and love as integral to the path Christians should take.⁶

Critique of the Anabaptist Vision

During a score of years, up to the time of the stormy era of the Vietnam generation beginning around 1964, a growing number of Mennonite and other Reformation scholars resonated with Bender's Anabaptist Vision. The Festschrift, The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision, edited by Guy F. Hersherberger and published in 1957, is a

powerful testimonial to this development. The Anabaptist Vision had become the byword throughout the Mennonite Church. And today the essay is still being reprinted under its own title, The Anabaptist Vision.

History has its own ways, however, of bringing about change. And the Vietnam era, which has come and gone, left a profound effect on the North American culture (and beyond). The Mennonite world, as it had been known, had come to an end. And no person living or dead has been able to turn back the clock.

Books have been written about the impact of the Vietnam era upon Mennonitism. At the time a barrier was erected so high that it is nearly impossible for the Mennonites of 2012 to understand the ethos and faith of our recent forebears – even as recent as the 1950s. Beginning in 1968, for example, the devotional covering for baptized women was no longer mandatory in the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. The tremendous import of the reality behind this change in symbol is hard to imagine, hard to overestimate and of utmost significance. And this symbol and reality, combined with a shift in church polity whereby in 1971 the Mennonite Church's governing body, called Mennonite General Conference (1898-1971), died and a new General Assembly was born,⁷ signals tremendous change within the largest branch of Mennonitism.

Trends and events of the times – inner-city uprisings, peace marches, the 1968 Democratic Convention, student unrest, Woodstock, secularism, assassinations, riots, Kent State, revolution – had also changed the very substance, spirit and structures of our 20th century Mennonite tradition. From being “neither in nor of the world,” as apparently had been the case for half a century, thanks to Vietnam we seemed to be transformed into being both in and of the world by the time of the 1980s. This is what some Mennonite observers and prophets were saying and predicting at the time. Had we really sold out to the world? Or had we just entered instead into a new phase of being in but not of the world round about us?

The vision from the perspective of 2012

The question remains: In the year 2012, do we still hold to a vision that balances the individual response (Christian discipleship) with the corporate dimension of being the gathered, peaceful people of God? By the 1980s and beyond, some second thoughts about the

Bender did not believe that he was creating a new theology but was returning to and recovering an old faith: that of his own spiritual ancestors.

The theme chosen for this event revolved around the triad of ideas which makes up the Anabaptist Vision. Both GCs and MCs entered into this spirit and substance naturally and enthusiastically. It seemed to be a natural foundation, one which fit all the way around. No one saw this as unusual or old-fashioned, Liberal or Conservative. In retrospect, it seems to have filled the bill of needs.

substance, spirit and structures of the Anabaptist Vision have indeed been uttered. Some people apparently are rejecting the Anabaptist Vision; some are critical of parts of it; some remain affirmative. It was a missive for its time. Therein lie its strengths, but also its limitations.

Those who think Bender's Anabaptist Vision of 1944 went too far down the road of simplification would probably criticize Bender even more for stating in 1950 that discipleship alone provides the clues for finding “the central controlling idea of Anabaptist theology.”⁸ On the other hand, in these days when spirituality is a major byword, those who ask about the spiritual dimension of Bender's Vision must read the whole of the Anabaptist Vision, as well as Bender's later interpretations of things Anabaptist in order to do him and his ideas justice. These include his 1950 essay, “The Anabaptist Theology of Discipleship,”⁹ where Bender documents his thesis historically, and his 1961 essay, “Walking in the Resurrection,”¹⁰ a description of a discipleship made possible only through the presence of the Spirit within and without – among those individuals gathered in Christ's name.

The continuing usefulness of the Anabaptist Vision

There is, however, something of a clue as to the continuing usefulness of the Anabaptist Vision even now. In 1983, at Bethlehem '83, the first joint churchwide conference of the two largest Mennonite groups, the General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) and the Mennonite Church (MC), took place. The theme chosen for this event revolved around the triad of ideas which

makes up the Anabaptist Vision. Both GCs and MCs entered into this spirit and substance naturally and enthusiastically. It seemed to be a natural foundation, one which fit all the way around. No one saw this as unusual or old-fashioned, Liberal or Conservative. In retrospect, it seems to have filled the bill of needs. Here is a clue to a deepening of the ongoing cooperative efforts of two Mennonite groups that would merge in 2002.

Whether anything else is found some day which might serve better our ongoing purposes as a gathered people is still open to speculation. In closing this essay, I note that Harold S. Bender was not reinventing the wheel when he brought together his Vision. Rather, he looked backward through his historian's rearview mirror and, employing a well-used Mennonite tactic of old, counseled with other brothers and sisters in the faith and finally came up with the 1944 Vision.

We would do well, 50 years after Bender's death, to also keep the rearview mirror in place, to counsel with others, and to continue in the quest for answering the question of how to be faithful to the original intent of the living Christ. Bender himself provides a clue to an answer in his "In Search of a City." An adapted excerpt reads:

In the long perspective of the four centuries that have passed since their beginnings in Switzerland and Holland, the Mennonites have often seemed to be a people without a country, wanderers upon the face of the earth, having no abiding city, seeking a City whose builder and maker is God.

These clear-visioned, high-seeking souls purposed to build the City of God on earth. But the world would not let them, even though that world itself often professed to

be also building the City of God. ... It was to be a City in which a living Christ should dwell, a Christ of love and service, around whom should gather women and men of his spirit and purpose among whom hatred and violence should be unknown.

Many people have sometimes laughed, even scoffed at these simple souls, who thought in their simplicity that it should be possible to create a fellowship of saints "without spot or wrinkle" in the midst of an evil world. But it is such scoffers and laughers who have always taken the heart out of people and have gone on leading the world into successive systems of greed, hatred and war, sometimes in the name of prosperity, sometimes in the name of patriotism and sometimes in the name of religion. ...

In the past century and a quarter, thousands of Mennonites have found a home in the favored and tolerant commonwealths of the United States and Canada. ... Whether in these new lands of liberty they may not face more subtle dangers of assimilation, more threatening ultimately to their way of life than the outright animosity of the hostile society of old Europe, remains to be seen.¹¹

It also remains to be seen how long the Anabaptist Vision will continue to speak to us.¹² Only time will tell, as current and future generations continue to probe the mystery of life and the mystery of that small segment of Christianity descending from the Anabaptists of long ago.¹³

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Endnotes

- 1 See Leonard Gross, "Recasting the Anabaptist Vision: The Longer View," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 60 (July 1986), 352-63.
- 2 In German: "Nachfolgung Christi." Leonard Gross, ed., *Golden Apples in Silver Bowls: The Rediscovery of Redeeming Love* (Lancaster, Pa.: Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 1999), 248.
- 3 The "Mennonite Church" as a denomination came into existence informally in 1864 (with the advent of John Funk's periodicals, the *Herald of Truth* and the *Herold der Wahrheit*) and formally, in 1898. In 2002 it merged with the General Conference Mennonite Church (which existed from 1860 to 2002). To distinguish between the two groups, the Mennonite Church often had "MC" appended to its name to distinguish itself from the General Conference Mennonite Church, to whose name "GC" was sometimes appended. Bender was formally MC, although his influence and extensive contacts with the GCs made him into something of a universal Mennonite.
- 4 See Mennonite Encyclopedia V, "Renaissance, Mennonite."
- 5 See Leonard Gross, "The Doctrinal Era of the Mennonite Church," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 60 (Jan. 1986), 83-103.
- 6 Some of the above is excerpted and adapted from Leonard Gross, "Harold Stauffer Bender," *Mennonite Encyclopedia* V, 1990.
- 7 The new General Assembly, replacing the old Mennonite General Conference in 1971, was consciously and determinedly congregational in polity. The new byword was "consensus." At that point the authoritarianism of Daniel Kauffman and his cohorts became an atypical interlude within our 450-year history.
- 8 Bender, "The Anabaptist Theology of Discipleship," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 24 (Jan. 1950), 25.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 25-32.
- 10 *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 35 (Apr. 1961), 96-110.
- 11 J. C. Wenger, *The Mennonite Church in America* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1966), 19-21.
- 12 The three tenets of Bender's Anabaptist Vision – discipleship, close community, and peace – continue to surface as a triad in various parts of the world. See Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2010); Palmer Becker, *What is an Anabaptist Christian?* (In the *Missio Dei* Series of the Mennonite Mission Network, PO Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46515 – revised edition, 2010); and John Driver, *Life Together in the Spirit: A Radical Spirituality for the Twenty-First Century* (Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism, Goshen College, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526 – published in 2011). Murray writes from the context of Britain and Ireland; Becker, with Canada and the United States in mind; and Driver, Latin America (his having written this volume first in Spanish, before translating it into English for a North American audience). Driver's many works in Spanish (not yet translated into English) are foundational within many free-church groups scattered throughout the Spanish-speaking world. Furthermore, the many works of John Howard Yoder continue to find broad acceptance, worldwide – a number of which may be found in translation. Yoder remained throughout his life steadfastly in tune with the Anabaptist Vision triad of tenets. And last but not least, Bender's *The Anabaptist Vision* is still in print (Herald Press) in English and Spanish, a mighty testimony to its continuing widespread relevance.
- 13 This article is a revision of my article, "Harold S. Bender and the Anabaptist Vision," *Mennonite Yearbook* 1994 (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1994), 9-12.

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According to Flickr, the Web application the archives uses to display its photographs, this image from the Andrew A. Miller Papers, receives top rankings for "interestingness."

Unfortunately, Flickr does not share its method for determining the "interestingness" of images. Andrew W. Miller was active in the Amish Mission Movement of the mid 20th century.



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